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DOCK LABOURERS IN BOMBAY

BY

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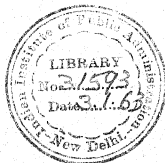
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R. P. CHOLIA.

Bombay,
3rd January, 1941.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

The condition of industrial labourers has attracted great attention in recent times. This has been reflected in special legislation which defines not only their working hours but also lays down some procedure for the settlement of disputes between employers and labourers. The growth of the Trade Union movement in the country has afforded some protection to the labourer and we have had several instances of organised strikes in the country in order to improve the wages and other conditions of labourers. Some of these have been successful in achieving their object.

The Government of Bombay have found it necessary to maintain a separate department called the Labour Office whose task, among other things, is to make investigations from time to time into the economic and social conditions of industrial labourers. The surveys carried out by the Labour Office afford useful material, on the basis of which action can be taken by those concerned to improve the position of the worker.

In an industrial and commercial city like that of Bombay, the work of the labourer working in the docks is no less important to its economic life than that of the labourer working in the factories. It is true that the number of Dock labourers is smaller than that of factory labourers, but in spite of that fact it must be remembered that the Dock labourers number about 10,000 or more, and on them depend so many of the activities of the City which redound to its greatness. It is unfortunate that the condition of this type of labourer has not attracted that attention which it should, in view of the important part that he plays in the life of the City.

In this book an attempt has been made to fill this gap. Whereas the general nature of work in a factory is well-known, the nature of work in the docks is not sufficiently known. Any attempt to understand the condition of the Dock labourers must therefore be preceded by an attempt to study the exact nature and condition of the work that he does. It was found that this involved a careful examination on the spot of different types of work at different stages of the handling of goods in the docks. It was necessary therefore to classify the Dock labourers into different types, examine the peculiarities of their work, and study their economic condition in the light of the same. In doing so the usual statistical method of random sampling was employed ; but in view of the special characteristics of Dock labourers it was thought desirable to make the sample as representative as possible, and therefore on an average 10% of the Dock labourers of each type were taken for the purposes of this investigation.

It is unfortunate that though the work was carried out during 1933-34, it was not possible to publish it earlier. Part of the work was published in the form of articles in the Journal of the University of Bombay in July 1937 and in January 1938. The response of the public to these articles and a grant from the University towards the cost of publication made it easier to publish this work. The opportunity, however, has been taken to see that though the material applies to 1933-34, it is applicable to present conditions in its broad outline. The condition of Dock labourers in Bombay City has not undergone any material change in the interval, and therefore the conclusions of this work remain as true to-day as in 1933-34.

In the actual carrying out of the investigation consi-

derable help was received from the authorities of the Bombay Port Trust, the Labour Unions, and some of the Stevedore firms, to all of whom the author is indebted.

C. N. VAKIL.

*School of Economics and Sociology,
University of Bombay,
3rd January, 1941.*

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INTRODUCTION

Trade of Bombay

Though comparatively of recent growth the Island of Bombay, twenty-five miles in area, consolidated into one single unit from a cluster of seven islets to the west of the Konkan, has now developed into the fourth largest city in the British Empire, and the second largest city in India. The Port of Bombay, well-known to the world as a port of international repute, on the Western coast serves not only as the 'Gateway of India' but also as the great distributing centre for the trade of Western and Central India, due to its central position and accessibility by sea and land. The total volume of trade as given below during the past ten years, shows the City's importance as a great trading centre of the East.

The Volume of Trade in Thousands of Tons (Imports and Exports) from 1924 to 1934¹

1 Year	2 Imports	3 Exports	4 Total
1924-25	3,418	3,041	6,459
1925-26	3,476	2,984	6,460
1926-27	3,159	2,434	5,593
1927-28	3,645	3,004	6,649
1928-29	3,354	3,353	6,707
1929-30	3,569	3,119	6,688
1930-31	2,950	2,910	5,860
1931-32	2,815	2,323	5,138
1932-33	2,784	1,905	4,689
1933-34	2,974	2,298	5,272

Population

The Bombay Islands were originally inhabited by Kolis—a Dravidian race—the aborigines of Western India, whose principal occupation was fishing. The rapid progress of trade

¹ See Foot-note p. 2.

and industry during the last century—especially the latter half—greatly increased the population of the city, as may be seen from the following table :—

Population of Bombay, (at each successive census)¹

1 Year	2 Actual Number	3 Variation in population taking population of 1872 as 100
1872	644,405	100
1881	773,196	120
1891	821,764	128
1901	776,006	120
1911	979,445	152
1921	1,175,914	182
1931	1,161,383	180

Bombay is only second to Calcutta in population, in the whole of India.

Industries and Occupations of the City

Of the total population, the labourers employed in the various industries and occupations of the City form a considerable portion. The most important industry is the Cotton Mill Industry, but a large number of workers are occupied in work provided by the Railways, the Municipality, the Docks, the Posts and Telegraphs, Gas and Electricity Companies, and certain Government Departments.

Dock workers : an uninvestigated section of Labourers

Since the middle of the last century, Bombay, on account of its excellent shipping and railway facilities, has been the

¹ B.P.T. :—'The Port of Bombay' Appendices. These figures show the volume of trade passing through the Docks, and the Bunders. Details of the imports and exports for the year 1933-34 are given in appendix "C".

The Volume of Trade in Thousands of Tons Imports and Exports
From 1934 to 1939

1 Year	2 Imports	3 Exports	4 Total
1934-35	3,169	2,272	5,441
1935-36	3,141	2,177	5,318
1936-37	2,980	2,480	5,460
1937-38	3,190	1,877	5,067
1938-39	3,209	1,887	5,096

The figures for the year 1932-33 show the acute trade depression in the city.

¹ Census of India.

chief centre of the cotton textile industry in India. Attempts have been made from time to time to study the economic condition of the working classes in general, and the textile workers in particular of the City of Bombay, by the 'Labour Office' of the Government of Bombay. But no attention has yet been paid to the study of the Dock workers, whose strength is no less than ten thousand.

Urgency of Study

The study of the economic condition of such a large number of labourers is essential in view of the fact that the trade of the port, which is the pride of the City, depends upon the skill and efficiency of the Dock workers, no less than upon other factors. The volume of trade that passes through the port has been decreasing since 1930, due to the general trade depression all over the world and the development of some new ports on the western coast of India. The decrease in the trade of the City has an adverse effect on the large number of Dock workers. The unemployment amongst Dock workers has not only decreased their total number, but has also affected the monthly earnings of those that have still clung to their occupation, due to the lesser number of working days. The year 1932 was a year of unrest and dissatisfaction amongst Stevedore Labourers, who for one reason or another decided to strike. The boycott of Indian Cotton by Japan increased unemployment, especially amongst those labourers who handled only cotton-bales. Some of them had to give up their occupation and take to some other work.

Scope

The scope of such an enquiry into the economic condition of labourers has to be determined by the particular features of the industry, the nature of the labour employed therein, as well as by the surrounding circumstances.

The Nature of Enquiry

On account of the absolute lack of statistical data and information regarding the Dock workers, considerable spade

work had to be done to obtain general information regarding their work and to understand properly their economic condition. Consequently the investigation cannot be simply restricted to the study of their budgets, but has also to take note of other factors. The study thus develops on its own lines, neither trying to fit itself in the one or the other stereotyped methods of investigation. The hope that some day an organised Survey of Life and Labour in Bombay will take a tangible form, has not been lost sight of while carrying on this investigation.

Method of Enquiry

The method of approach in the case of an enquiry of this nature is indicated by the Labour Office. "A resolution passed by the Third International Conference of Labour Statisticians says, 'it is preferable to ask for less detailed information than to reduce the number of families covered by the enquiry.' The Labour Office agrees with this view."¹ The methods of investigation, followed by the New Survey of Life and Labour in London, also reveal the great practical importance of asking as few questions as possible to the labourers. Accordingly the 'extensive' method as suggested by the aforesaid resolution has been kept in mind while pursuing this enquiry. The method of filling in detailed schedules from the workers is scrupulously avoided, and instead a new type of schedule has been prepared to replace the old ones. (A copy of the said schedule has been given in Appendix "A").

After inquiring about the age, caste and birthplace, the schedule proceeds to the problem of native occupation and causes of immigration. Then comes the topic about wages, income and expenditure, and lastly the question as to the savings or debts of the labourers.

Classification of Labourers

The large number of Dock workers involved in the study

¹ Government of Bombay Report on an Enquiry into Working Class Family Budgets in Bombay City, p. 1.

are neither of the same type, nor is the nature of their work, their wages, and the standard and mode of their living the same. Two main divisions can be made amongst Dock workers, *viz.*, those that handle cargo at the docks, which is the main activity of the docks; and the rest occupied otherwise in the miscellaneous activities which contribute to the smooth working of the docks. Almost all the workers of the first division are casual labourers employed either by the employers themselves or through some middlemen. Some of them are employed by the Stevedore Firms, and others by the Hamallage Department of the Bombay Port Trust. On the other hand, the second division consists of those labourers, who are not casual workers, but are classed as 'temporary labourers', and who are employed by the Bombay Port Trust directly, through its various departments.

The principal Dock workers may again be sub-divided into three groups and other Dock workers into four more groups. The following table shows not only the various groups of the Dock workers, but also their total number, and the number of schedules filled in from each group.

Classification of Dock Workers, Their Number & Number of Schedules Filled In.

1 GROUPS OF DOCK LABOURERS	2 APPROXIMATE TOTAL NUMBER	3 NUMBER OF SCHEDULES FILLED IN	4 PERCENTAGE OF SCHEDULES TO TOTAL LABOURERS
Principal Dock labourers—			
1. Stevedore labourers ..	2,000	110	5.5
2. Shore labourers ..	2,300	180	7.8
3. Coal labourers ..	2,000	110	5.5
Other Dock labourers—			
Labourers working—			
4. On Water ..	700	150	21.4
5. On Shore ..	1,200	150	12.5
6. In Mechanical Workshop ..	800	150	18.7
7. On Railway ..	1,000	150	15.0
Total ..	<u>10,000</u>	<u>1,000</u>	<u>10.0</u>

The nature and condition of work of the labourers in these seven groups differ substantially from each other, and so do their wages, which in their turn affect their standard and mode of living. This difference amongst them has necessitated a separate detailed study of each of the seven groups.

Total number of Labourers

It is not possible to give an accurate figure about the total number of labourers, so an attempt has been made to arrive at an approximate round number in each group, as well as on the whole.

Sample Method

Schedules have been filled from these ten thousand labourers on a sample method. Labourers were selected not only from each group, but even from each important type of labourers in each group. A sufficient number of labourers have been selected from each group, to ensure accurate results. Though on the average, the investigation has been carried out on a ten per cent. basis, the rigidity of the percentage had sometimes to be relaxed, in view of the nature and variety of labourers involved in each group. Often when the investigation already made in one group, was found more than sufficient and when similar conditions prevailed amongst the rest, the percentage of schedules filled in from that group was decreased. As a matter of fact it will be found that the percentage of schedules filled in from the labourers of the first division is less than ten. On the other hand, where there were too many types of labourers involved in each group, the percentage of the schedules had to be increased till satisfactory reliable information could be obtained.

The total number of all the Dock labourers comes to about ten thousand, and that of the schedules filled in from amongst them to one thousand, representing on the whole 10 per cent. of the total labourers. The basis of ten per cent. has been sufficient to give reliable data and to arrive at accurate results.

Manner of approach : Co-operation of the Employers and the Employees

The Bombay Port Trust and the Stevedore Firms were found to be the only employers of all these labourers. The Bombay Port Trust, and some of the Stevedore Firms co-operated with us in our investigation and gave us all facilities. The Labour Unions were equally useful in giving us all available assistance and encouragement. We take this opportunity of thanking them of all for their sincere co-operation in our work.

Period of Enquiry

Preliminary inquiries were made in the beginning of December 1933, and by the time the Labour Unions were approached it was the end of January 1934. It took about a month more to approach the Bombay Port Trust, and the Stevedore Firms ; and it was not until the end of February 1934 that the first schedule was filled in. The investigation about the labourers under the Port Trust was started in right earnest, and one by one the labourers under the various departments were taken up. The Coal labourers under the Stevedore Firms were then approached. However there were many difficulties in dealing with the Stevedore labourers, and so efforts had to be made right from the beginning of the enquiry to obtain sufficient reliable data regarding them. All this work carried us to the middle of June 1934, by which time the monsoon had already set in. The enquiry thus extends over a period of more than six months.

Difficulties Encountered

The timidity and suspicious nature of the labourers in India must be well-known to any one dealing with them. The suspicions of the Dock labourers are likely to increase especially when one moves about with the Port Trust Officers. The greatest fear of the labourers under the Port Trust was to mistake us for some recruiting or retrenchment officer ap-

pointed by the authorities ; and so at first they hesitated to give any information. It was only on the assurance of their immediate superiors, that the information collected from them was likely to be used to their advantage, and that we had no concern either with the Port Trust or the Government, that the labourers began to have confidence, and answered questions. After some time, however, they got accustomed to the nature of questions that were put to them. The news, that some investigation was being carried on amongst them, had in the meantime spread like wild-fire ; and when their own Labour Unions and Muccadums, who could be persuaded with some difficulty to understand the nature of the enquiry, assisted us, the labourers began taking interest in the investigation, and in due course they became quite familiar with us. No opportunity of mixing with these labourers was missed. Whenever they met, either at their 'chawls', or at their Unions, or when they were taking rest in the noon, or while working, no occasion was lost of sitting with them and talking to them freely. At times we had to talk over a cup of tea in some restaurant. Emboldened by such overtures, and also by the magic effect of the camera, they answered every question honestly and gave us the necessary information.

The Coal labourers were approached through their Muccadums, who were introduced to us by their employers, and some of the social workers amongst them. Consequently they did not grudge giving the necessary information.

Difficulties however had to be encountered in tackling the Stevedore labourers. The incidents and effect of the strike of 1932, which had greatly strained the relations between the employers and the employees, were still so fresh that any mention of the employer before the employee would make the latter uneasy. Even in the case of those sympathetic employers, who permitted us to go on board the steamers where the work was going on, for collecting information, the

Serang¹ often proved an obstacle. Some of the labourers gave information on board the steamers while at work, but some would not. Hence, for them, we had to follow different methods. The supporters of the Labour Union were called to the office of the Union, while those, who were unwilling to attend the office, were interviewed near the dock-gates each evening.

Thus no stone was left unturned to collect reliable data from all possible sources. In order to arrive at unbiased results both the employers and the employees were consulted on important points. Throughout the whole enquiry the idea has been to collect information with a view to study their true economic condition. The schedules were filled in while obtaining this information. As a matter of fact nearly 300 schedules out of the total of 1300 schedules, which were filled in during the course of the enquiry, had to be rejected for want of reliability, and only 1000 schedules were selected for the final study.

The work is, thus, the result, partly of general information collected and impressions gathered during the course of the enquiry, and partly of actual data collected which has been arranged and annexed as appendix, "B".

Arrangement of Chapters

The work has been divided into ten chapters. The first chapter deals with the history and development of the Port, and the second with its description. These chapters provide the background and other environment in which the Dock labourers have to work. As stated already, each of the seven groups of labourers has been treated separately. Chapters three to five refer to each of the groups of principal Dock labourers, and the following four chapters deal with the remaining groups. The last chapter is a survey of the condition of all the Dock labourers taken together, and contains a summary of the conclusions.

¹ Serangs are the middlemen through whom the Stevedore labourers are employed.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PORT

“To visualise the commercial scope of a world port and its capacity for future expansion one should know something of its history and administration, the sources of its trade and their potential development and the facilities it offers for handling and distribution.”¹

Political History

From times immemorial the various minor Rajas of the Maurya, Chalukya and Silahara dynasties held sway over Bombay and the surrounding districts. The end of the 12th century saw the Mahomedan invaders depriving them of their kingdoms. In the 14th century, one finds a certain Bhima Raja, changing his Court from Thana to Mahim on the Bombay Island, and building a palace, a court of justice, and a temple. All these have, however, perished leaving no trace even of their existence. Then ensued a struggle of supremacy between the Hindus and the Mahomedans, and Bombay changed hands till at last it enjoyed a settled period under the Portuguese, during the years 1534 to 1664.

The East India Company

The East India Company, incorporated by a charter from Queen Elizabeth, secured permission from Jehangir, the Mughal Emperor, to establish a ‘Kothi’—a trading centre—at Surat. The unhappy position in which the company was often placed, due to the revocable nature of the ‘Farmans’ issued by the Emperor, the gratification which the local Governor often extracted, and the constant fear of confiscation of bullion and merchandise ashore soon made the Directors realise the importance of having a stronghold. Bombay seemed to be an excellent place of security, accessible only by sea, and also a refuge for ships. The Surat Council therefore

¹ B.P.T. : Port of Bombay, p. 1.

urged the Directors to acquire this town, if possible by purchase. Nothing, however, was done in the matter, till an opportunity offered itself on the occasion of the marriage of Charles II to Infanta Catherine of Braganza, and under the provisions of the marriage treaty signed at Whitehall on the 23rd June 1661, the Port and Island of Bombay, "with all rights, profits, territories, whatsoever thereunto belonging"¹ were transferred to the King of Great Britain, his heirs and successors. Owing to the innumerable difficulties and obstacles raised by the Portuguese authorities, the formal charge of the Island was deferred till the 18th February, 1665. On the 27th March, 1668, the Port and Island of Bombay were transferred by Royal Charter from the Crown to the East India Company at an annual payment of £ 10, and remained with the Company till 1858, when the administration of India was taken over by the Crown, under the 'Act for the better Government of India' passed by the British Parliament.

Ancient Trade Relations

The City of Bombay, being of comparatively recent growth, it is useless to attempt to trace trade relations with it directly in ancient history. The neighbouring ports of Broach, Sopara, Chaul, Janjira, Kalyan, and Thana had acquired fame throughout the East for many centuries, and attracted merchants from distant places. Trade relations existed between Western India and Egypt, Phoenicia, and Babylon, many hundreds of years, B.C. ; but the earliest mention of the trade relations of the Konkan is found in the works of Ptolemy (150 A.D.) and in the 'Periplus of the Erytrean Sea'. The latter work describes Kalyan as a flourishing port, and so does Cosmas, a Greek merchant in the sixth century A.D.

Suleiman of Basra (A.D. 851) mentions 'the Kingdom of Konkan with its capital Tana (Thana)'. In 916 A.D., the famous traveller Al Masudi of Bagdad refers to Thana, but

¹ B.P.T. : Port of Bombay, p. 9.

not until the 12th century, do we find any direct reference to Bombay Harbour. Al Idrisi, a merchant of Sicily was charmed by Thana a pretty town upon a great gulf, where vessels anchor and from whence they set sail. Marco Polo (1290) during his travels sailed up to the west coast of India on his way from the Court of Kablai Khan, and is supposed to have passed the monsoon of the year 1293 at Thana.

Development of the Port and Its Trade

The Island of Bombay, twenty-five square miles in area, was consolidated into one single unit from a cluster of seven islets, to the west of the Konkan. The formation of the islets indicate that in some prehistoric era they were rent asunder from the mainland by a series of titanic disturbances, which determined the configuration of India's western coast, and bequeathed to Bombay the spacious harbour.

Although at present, Thana may be considered the upper limit of the harbour, some two thousand years ago, Kalyan, situated about 9 miles further inland on the tidal creek of Ulhas river, was fully accessible to ocean going ships. Throughout the ages the process of siltation worked its way to block the interior of the harbour, and the scenes of activities of trade were transferred from Kalyan to Thana and then to Bombay, which now alone enjoys the advantage of the harbour.

At one time it was believed that the name of Bombay was derived from Portuguese 'Buon bahia' 'good harbour' but the current accepted version is that the derivation goes back to an earlier period and is to be found in the name of "Mumba Ai", the consort of Shiva, a deity of the Koli settlers. The nomenclature of various localities like Colaba, Kalbadevi, Sewri, and Koliwada, tend to establish the location of their original settlements.

Though in the early years of the Christian era the inhabitants of the islands used to have some dealings with the main land ports of Thana and Kalyan, by the seventh century A.D.

the settlers had a close touch with the neighbouring settlements. The colonization and development of Bombay may be traced by about 1260 A.D., when Bhima Raja established a new capital at Mahim. The able English administrator Gerald Aunjier, after transferring his head-quarters from Surat to Bombay in 1672, by his policy of freedom of trade and encouragement of indigenous industries advanced the trade of the Port, which till then was restricted to the sale of dried fish and cocoanuts to neighbouring coastal towns. By the end of the following year he could write to the Court of Directors as under :—

“Now the country merchants derive a great trade with Surat, Broach, Cambay and Gogo and also Dabull, Kelsey, Rajapore, and Goa, to Mocha, Persia, Scindia, Bussora, in salt, cocoanuts, cairo, betelnuts, rice, elephants’ teeth (from Mozambique) broad-cloth, lead, sword blades, and some other Europe Goods. Last year we disposed in Bombay of 600 pieces broad-cloth, 3,000 maunds lead, all the perpetuanes and serges, and all the sword blades.”¹

The honour of laying the foundation of the City which was to be ‘Urbs Prima in India’ may be bestowed on Aunjier, whose firm administration of Bombay induced traders of diverse countries to come and settle in Bombay. The commercial prosperity of the city, which was given a set back during the end of the seventeenth century, by the outbreak of plague, and the piratical enterprise of Kanhoji Angria and his sons for nearly 50 years, again revived on the arrival of Governor Charles Boone in 1715, and made steady progress throughout the century. In the year 1728 the value of the export trade, consisting mainly of cotton goods, paper, silk and precious stones, rose to an average of £ 758,000 a year. Weavers and artisans from far and near flocked under the

¹ B.P.T. : Port of Bombay, p. 11.

Company's banner, and the population increased from under 10,000 in 1660 to 113,000 in 1780. Regular trade communications with the principal seaports and the inland trade centres of India, Arabia, Persia, and East Africa, were established. The abolition of the Company's commercial monopoly in 1813, opened communications with Liverpool, Bristol, and Glasgow. The foreign trade of Bombay, which was fast expanding, was valued at 700 lakhs of rupees in 1835, and was nearly four times as much a quarter of a century later.

Age of Steam

Soon after the advent of steam in 1815, a demand for a regular steam service arose, and by the year 1838 regular monthly communications between Bombay and England by the overland route *via* Suez and Alexandria were established. Bombay was within 30 days reach from London in 1843, and two years later a regular fortnightly mail service was introduced.

Facilities at the Port in the 17th Century

Aunjiers himself describes the facilities for shipping which the Port of Bombay offered. "The great bay or port," he wrote, "is certainly fairest, largest and securest in all these parts of India, where a hundred sail of tall ships may ride all the year safe with good anchorage. In the small bay to the North of the Castle ships of 400 tons have been haled ashore to repair, there being 15 feet of water at the springs : in the lesser bay to northward of the Fort, ships of 300 tons may be haled ashore ; at Mazgaon, ships of 200 tons may be haled ashore ; also at a place called Drumgo there is an excellent bay where 50 sail of 200 tons each may winter and repair safely. For small frigates, goralas and other vessels there are very many places."¹ By the year 1715 when Governor Charles Boone arrived, on the advice of the Directors, Bombay

¹ B.P.T. : Port of Bombay, p. 13.

was made a port of call for ships to and from Madras and Bengal.

Ship-building

The maritime nations of the East were skilled in the art of ocean navigation, and ship-building was an industry of some importance. Bombay held a famous position as a ship-building centre from 1735 till the advent of steam. Many famous ships of the Company were built in Bombay, notable among them being the 'Scaleby Castle' launched in 1798, and the 'Buckinghamshire' built in 1816.

Docks

The first dry dock of Bombay was constructed on the site of the present Government Dockyard, as far back as 1748. Two more dry docks followed in quick succession, but the idea of constructing a wet dock was not conceived till a century later in 1875. Prior to 1875, ships used to load or discharge cargo in the stream. In 1775 the shipping facilities consisted of two marine gates with a wharf and cranes built out from each gate, besides a landing place for passengers only.

The Constitution of the Bombay Port Trust

The establishment of Railways, Posts and Telegraphs, which had a healthy effect on the development of the trade of India, also increased the inland trade of Bombay. With a regular coastal steamer service, opened in 1866, and quicker foreign mail service after the opening of the Suez Canal to traffic in 1866, the maritime trade of Bombay was greatly increased. Bombay now assumed the importance of a great trading port of the East, and was in fact the "Gateway of India."

Except for a short interval on the cessation of the American Civil War in 1865, the whole of the latter half of the last century was an age of continuous rapid growth.

A long-felt want of sufficient accommodation for wharves and wet docks came to the forefront, especially because

the private companies who were granted a monopoly to provide accommodation for landing and shipping began to take an undue advantage, by subjecting the trade to wharfage and other charges. The Chief amongst such Companies was the Elphinstone Land and Pressing Company formed in 1858, which by an extensive scheme of reclamation had acquired possession of land on the western frontage of the harbour. On the cessation of the American Civil War in 1865, the export of cotton, which was highly stimulated during the War, received a severe shock ; and prices of shares of all descriptions fell much below par, bringing to grief many a concern. The property of the said Elphinstone Land and Pressing Company also depreciated in value, and its shares fell in value by fifty per cent.

The Government of Bombay, taking advantage of the opportunity, prevailed upon the Government of India to buy over the said Company, and acquire possession of the western frontage of the harbour : So in 1869 the rights of the company were bought by the Government at par value of the paid-up capital, and by the Bombay Port Trust Act of 1873, the administration and properties of the company were vested in a public trust. A Corporation under the name and style of the Trustees of the Port of Bombay was created and was vested with the power of management of the properties, and the power to levy dues on goods which passed over their wharves. Yet there were other private wharf owners, who always competed with the Trustees, and put the latter to a loss. Government soon realised the inconvenience to the trade due to this diverse control and management of the wharves, and in 1879 bought all the private concerns for and on behalf of the Trustees of the Board. The Port Trust Act was amended in the same year and the constitution of the Board was made representative of all interests. The Board at present consists of one whole-time Chairman, appointed by Government, and twenty one members, of whom

five are elected by the Bombay Chamber of Commerce, five by the Indian Merchants' Chamber, one by the Bombay Municipality and one by the Millowners' Association. The remaining eight members are nominated by Government, one amongst whom is a representative of labour.

Not only the duty of regulation and development of the Port lies on the Trustees of the Board, but the control of the Pilot Service and the conservancy and lighting of the harbour is also vested in them. The latter services were, till 1873, controlled by a body established in 1863, designated the Harbour and Pilotage Board.

CHAPTER II

THE HARBOUR AND ITS ACTIVITIES

The Island of Bombay, with its natural deep water harbour, and up-to-date landing and shipping facilities, is admirably suitable to the requirements of maritime trade. Some 70 square miles in extent, the harbour provides ample shelter for ships of all kinds all the year round. The harbour runs north-east and south-west and is about twelve miles long and four to six miles in width. The minimum depth at the entrance fairway is 32 feet at low water, and a depth of 37 feet is available at all states of tides in the deep water anchorage abreast of the docks. The maximum draught for ships passing through the Suez Canal being fixed at 32 feet, (which is to be increased to a maximum of 35 feet) Bombay will still retain the proud position of having adequate natural facilities for ships which call here, for years to come. The velocity of the stream at the harbour entrance between Thull Shoal and Prongs Reef is two to three knots on strong spring tides, and increases to as much as four knots in the Monsoon. The mean range of the greatest ordinary spring tides is 13.9 feet.

Lights and Navigation

Bombay today is one of the best lighted ports of the world, its three principal entrance lights being the Kennery and the Prongs lighthouses and the unattended Floating Light Vessel.

Kennery Lighthouse

Kennery Island greets the vessels bound for Bombay, within the range of hundred miles, by her wireless automatic direction signals, sent out by the recently installed wireless beacon. Although only twenty miles in area the island has played a prominent part in history as an abode of Angria and his bold pirates. The Lighthouse was built in 1867 and is characterised by a grouping of two white flashes every ten seconds, visible

at a distance of 19 miles. The wireless beacon transmits its signal, with sixteen repetitions, at six stated intervals every hour, but in thick weather the signal is sent out every four minutes. Both Kennery and the Prongs are connected by wireless with the Port Signal Station at Ballard Pier, and Pilot Vessel "Lady Wilson".

Prongs Lighthouse

The Prongs Lighthouse was constructed in 1867 to the south of Colaba Point and is surrounded by reefs. It is distinguished at night by a white flash of light exhibited every 10 seconds visible at a distance of 17 miles.

Floating Light Vessel

The unattended Floating Light Vessel is moored in the entrance to the harbour fairway. Its white group-flashing light, three flashes in quick succession every 24 seconds from a masthead, is visible at a distance of 11 miles.

Before the advent of the Prongs and Kennery Lighthouses, between 1826 to 1872, about sixty wrecks were recorded, nine of which occurred round Kennery Island. To complete the full lighting arrangement two lighted Buoys are moored in the entrance fairway to the south-east, and south of the Prongs Lighthouse.

Pilot Vessel "Lady Wilson"

Pilotage is compulsory for all vessels, except for His Majesty's Ships of War ; and the Pilotage Bye-Laws made by the Trustees to the Port of Bombay, under sections 72-73 of the Bombay Port Trust Act, 1879, provide for the direction and arrangement of the Port and the Pilotage. The Pilot Vessel "Lady Wilson" will be found floating about a mile or two south-west of the Sunk Rock Lighthouse during the day, displaying, the usual pilot flag (red and white horizontal halves) hoisted at the main, and at night, the lights prescribed for stream pilot vessels—a bright white light at the masthead with a red light 8 feet below, visible 2 miles away. The sight of the "Lady Wilson" to a vessel entering the port is a signal

to slow down to take on board the Pilot, who will navigate her alongside Ballard Pier, or the dock-gates.

Gradually as the ship advances towards the Pier there rise in the dim horizon the "Great City," the beautiful sights of the harbour, and the magnificent buildings facing the water front, a sign of the prosperity of the Island of Bombay. At Apollo Bunder the sight is arrested by the Taj Mahal Hotel, and the Gateway of India, built to commemorate the visit of His Majesty the late King-Emperor George V. to India in 1911. Then comes Ballard Pier where every year some fifty thousand people of various races and nationalities embark or disembark.

Port Signal Station

High up on the top of the tower at Ballard Pier is situated the Port Signal Station, which repeats the numbers hoisted by ships, and keeps a watch for vessels in distress. The storm warnings received from the Meteorological Office at Poona are immediately after their reception, hoisted at the Station by day or night.

THE DOCKS

Wet Docks

Though the need for a wet dock was felt as early as 1810, the first wet dock—the Sassoon Dock at Colaba—was opened to traffic in 1875, and was constructed by a private company. It has a water area of $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres, depth of about 18 feet, and could accommodate about five ships of 1,000 tons each. The Port Trust purchased it in 1879, and it has been used for the last twenty years by fishing boats and country craft.

The great anxiety of the Port Trust has always been to provide the most up-to-date facilities for the trade and shipping of the Port. With this object in view the Trustees in course of time constructed three wet docks, with a basin area of 105 acres, six lineal miles of quayage, and transit-sheds and warehouses, to meet the changing requirements of trade. The three wet docks the Prince's, Victoria and Alexandra

Docks were constructed in 1880, 1888 and 1914 respectively, according to the dimensions given below :—

NAME & DATE OF COMPLETION	WIDTH OF ENTRANCE	MAXIMUM AVAILABLE DEPTH	WATER AREA	LINEAL FEET OF QUAYAGE	NUMBER OF BERTHS (INCLUDING HARBOUR WALLS)	
					OCEAN GOING	COASTAL
Prince's Dock (1880).	66 feet.	27 feet.	30	6,885	10	7
Victoria Dock (1888).	80 ..	29 ..	25	8,181	12	3
Alexandra Dock (1914).	100 ..	33 ..	49½	15,540	20	3

The two older docks are connected by a communication passage and the entrance gates are opened about half tide before high water. The entrance lock of the Alexandra Dock, about 750 feet long, enables ships to be docked at all stages of the tide.

Dry Docks

Dry Dock arrangements were provided for by the Government as early as 1748, and by 1811 there were five dry docks. Three other small dry docks were also constructed between 1845 and 1867 by private companies.

The Trustees possess two dry docks, the Mereweather Dry Dock, situated at the north-west corner of the Prince's Dock, and the Hughes' Dry Dock, parallel with the Alexandra Dock Lock. The former was completed in 1891, and has a length of 525 feet, width at entrance is 65 feet 6 inches, and the depth of water over blocks is 22 feet. The latter was completed in 1914, and has a length of 1,000 feet, width at entrance is 100 feet, and the depth of water over blocks is 30 feet 11 inches. Floating caissons are used for closing the dry docks, and stops are provided at the Hughes' Dry Dock to divide it into two compartments.

Transit Sheds, Warehouses and Other Equipment

Every berth in the docks, except two which are reserved as open berths for certain class of cargo, has its own transit

shed, equipped with Hydraulic cranes and hoists and shoots for discharge of bag cargo, etc. The total floor area of these sheds is about 2,500,000 square feet. There are 111, thirty cwt. non-luffing moveable hydraulic quay-cranes in the Prince's and Victoria Docks, and 85 thirty-five cwt. and 8 six-ton luffing cranes in the Alexandra Dock and at Ballard Pier. In addition, there is one 30-ton crane in Prince's Dock, a 100-ton crane in Victoria Dock, and a 60-ton floating crane 'Sarus'. Besides these transit sheds, each dock has a range of warehouses, facing the main road behind the dock, where goods can be stored for any period, the total floor area of duty paid and bonded warehouses being approximately one million square feet. All the warehouses and transit sheds, with a few exceptions, are served by the Bombay Port Trust Railway.

An important facility in the Alexandra Dock is the provision of a Fuel Oil pipe with connections to enable oil-burning vessels to bunker at any berth.

Pir Pau Pier

The development of the Oil Industry during recent years has necessitated special arrangements for the discharge and storage of oil. Petrol and Kerosene are discharged from Tankers at Pir Pau Pier, situated at the north end of the harbour, and are pumped a distance of $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the installations at Wadala.

There are two lines of pipes, a 10 inch one for Petrol and superior Kerosene and an 8 inch one for inferior Kerosene. Electric lights are provided all along the line, to enable the work to be done at night. The ship's pumps operate as far as the Pumping Station, about a mile from the Pier head, and from thence the oil is pumped to Wadala by the Pumping Station, at a maximum rate of 1,000 gallons per minute. No fires are allowed on board the vessels while discharging dangerous Petroleum, the necessary steam for pumps being supplied from outside, by separate arrangement.

Fuel Oil and Kerosene are also discharged at the Alexandra Dock Harbour Wall. Kerosene is pumped from there to Wadala a distance of 5 miles, through an 8 inch pipe and the Fuel Oil to the Liquid Fuel Depot just to the north of the docks through 8 and 10 inch pipes. The same fuel pipes are used for supplying bunkers to ships in the Alexandra Dock or at the Harbour Wall.

Oil Installations

Petrol and Kerosene installations are at Wadala, and Fuel Oil installations are at Wadi Bunder. The total land leased out for the former installations is 55 acres, and 10 acres are leased out for the latter ones.

Bunders

For the convenience of coasting and country craft and the overside cargo from the docks and the stream, a number of 'Bunders' or open wharves and basins are provided along the harbour front, making up a total of 38,000 lineal feet quayage.

Different commodities are handled at separate Bunders, which are completely equipped with cranes, sheds and other facilities, for loading, unloading and storage.

Bombay Port Trust Railway

A Port Railway has not only to serve the various berths in the docks, but has also to connect them with all the trunk lines serving the Port. Such a Railway is known as a "Belt Line" in America.

The Bombay Port Trust Railway at Wadala Junction, seven miles north of Alexandra Dock, joins the two trunk lines, B. B. & C. I. and G. I. P. Railways.

Prior to 1914, a lot of unnecessary handling took place; for the goods-termini of these two lines, which served the docks, lay to the west of Frere Road, and the docks to the east; so every time wagons had to be shunted across the busy road, and in case of export, goods had got to be carted from the termini to the docks.

With the completion of the Alexandra Dock and the in-

crease of goods traffic, the Trustees decided to have their own Railway which was opened for traffic in January 1915. Excepting a few berths in the older docks, all the dock-berths are served by this Railway, and in the Alexandra Dock the Transit Sheds have sidings both in the front and at the back. These Railway facilities are also provided for all the warehouses in the docks, the Petrol, Kerosene and Fuel Oil installations, the Cotton Depot, the Manganese Ore Depot, and the Coal Depot. Thus the services rendered by the Port Trust Railway extend beyond the functions of a "Belt Line".

The actual length of the Railway from North to South is only 7 miles, but the total trackage is 118 miles. The important feature of the Railway lay out is the way in which the through lines have been kept clear of all yards and shunting. These lines connect with the trunk lines at Rowli, in the north, and the southern end terminates at Ballard Pier. The Railway mainly deals in Goods Traffic, and it directly undertakes booking on the Trunk Lines. Marshalling and sorting out of wagons is done at Wadala. Besides every week, the G. I. P. Railway Company's Calcutta train-de-luxe and the Imperial Indian Mail, and a part of the B. B. & C. I. Railway Company's Frontier Mail, meet the P. & O.'s Mail Steamers at the Pier. The booking of passengers and their luggage is done by the respective railways concerned.

There are nine stations on the Port Trust Railway, *viz.*, Wadala, Oil Depot, Stores and Coal Depot, Grain Depot, Manganese Ore Depot, Cotton Depot, Panton Bunder, Victoria Dock and Alexandra Dock. Of the various depots, indicated by the names of the Stations, the Cotton Depot deserves special mention.

Cotton Depot

India enjoys the second place among the Cotton producing countries of the World, her average produce being 20 per cent of the total. In early times cotton, and cotton goods used to be exported to Egypt and Rome, as the art of handloom

weaving even in those days had reached perfection. The Industrial Age, with its textile mills gave a death blow to this cottage industry, but simultaneously created a world-wide demand for Indian Cotton which stimulated export. There is also a wide local market for Cotton on account of the existence of the textile mills in the country.

The Cotton Depot from Colaba Cotton Green was shifted to Sewree in 1923. It has 178 ferro-concrete godowns, all equipped with grinnel sprinklers, accommodating about one million bales, and 230 raised plinths for extra storage in the open. The Exchange Hall of the East Indian Cotton Association, and offices of its members, are also situated at Sewree.

CHAPTER III

STEVEDORE LABOURERS

Principal Labourers and Others

There are two main groups into which Dock labourers can be divided. One is that of Principal Dock labourers and the other that of labourers working in other activities of the docks. The former group of labourers directly handle the cargo at one or the other stage when it is being loaded or unloaded, either on the wharf or in the stream. The labourers in the second group on the other hand never lay even a finger to the cargo but attend to the other work of the docks. Yet their services are none the less important for the smooth working of the docks and the safety of the vessels. The table on page 27 will show the different types of Dock labourers according to the classification suggested above.

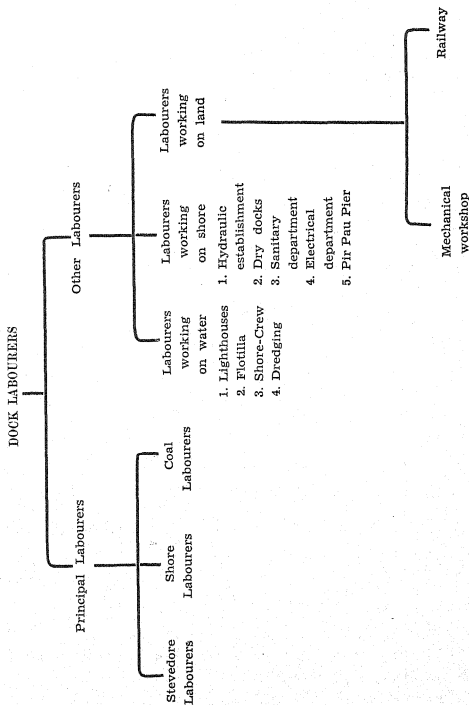
Labour in Docks

The main feature of dock labour, as compared with labour in other industries, is its casual character ; and the industry displays in the most striking manner the effects of casual labour. "Employment in a port is casual because the demand for labour is intermittent. This intermittency is in the main unavoidable. The demand rises and falls in seasonal fluctuations which correspond with harvests and the opening and closing of ice-bound ports abroad, and with the custom of traders. It also rises and falls from day to day as ships, delayed by weather or tide, arrive and leave in great or small numbers"¹ "In India, the monsoon is an additional factor affecting both shipping arrangements and the amount of produce available for export"² The short time within which

¹ Smith : The New Survey of London Life and Labour, Vol. II, pp. 389-390.

² Government of India : Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, p. 184.

TABLE SHOWING CLASSIFICATION OF DOCK LABOURERS.



the steamers are to be loaded or unloaded is also a factor affecting the demand for labour, especially the demand for night shifts.

Process of Unloading and Loading Cargo

A cargo steamer has usually five hatches or holds, two in front and three at the rear. Each of these hatches has three decks, upper, middle and lower ; all full of cargo. When a steamer is berthed in the dock, the moveable cranes on the quay are properly adjusted and the work of unloading the cargo begins. Some labourers enter the hatch, tie the goods in a sling, and put the sling in the hook of the crane, which then lifts the sling and deposits the same on the shore. The labourers on the shore thereafter carry the goods in the adjoining transit sheds, where they are sorted, checked with the 'general manifests', supplied by the Captain of the steamer, and stacked. On satisfying the Customs Appraiser, and payment of Port Trust and other charges, a 'Gate Pass' is issued to the owner of the goods, who either takes them to his own godowns or keeps them in the bonded or duty-paid warehouses of the Port Trust. The reverse process is followed in the case of export cargo to be loaded on vessels.

Stevedore Firms

The labourers working on board the steamer are under Stevedore firms, *i.e.* firms which undertake the contract of loading and unloading cargo on vessels from the steamship companies. On the other hand all the labourers working on the shore are the Port Trust employees. The former are known as Stevedore Labourers and the latter as Shore Labourers. The goods are deemed to be in the possession of the steamship companies till they are safely deposited on the wharf from the boat, and only thereafter the Port Trust takes delivery of the same.

Stevedore Labourers and their Classification

The Stevedore firms employ the labourers, through inter-

mediaries, known as Serangs. Each firm employs its own monthly paid Serang. He approaches the labourers through other middlemen called the Tindals. Each Tindal has under him a gang of labourers, each gang consisting of six labourers, excluding the Tindal. Excepting a Serang and a Tindal, the rest of the labourers are divided into three classes, viz. Hatchmen, Winchmen and Foremen. A Hatchman is so called because he works in a hatch, whereas a Winchman works a winch i.e. the crane of a vessel. A Foreman's duty is to give instructions by movements of his hand to a Winchman, or a Craneman on the wharf.

Migratory Character of Labour

The demand for labour varies with the arrival and departure of the vessels in the docks. To some extent it is also affected by the urgency with which goods are to be loaded or unloaded. Hence an employer cannot afford to employ labourers on monthly or even weekly wages; but has to employ them from day to day according to his need. Some firms, however, which are sure of minimum daily work, employ a few gangs on the monthly wages and others from day to day according to their requirements. Thus, the same labourer has an opportunity to get himself employed, on daily wages, with the same or different firms in accordance with the periodic demand.

Total number of Stevedore Labourers and Schedules

Due to the fluctuating nature of employment of labour, and its migratory character, it is possible to give only an approximate round figure of the total number of Stevedore labourers, which is estimated at two thousand. The total number of schedules filled in from these labourers is 110, representing more than 5 per cent. of the total labourers. Out of the total schedules 23 refer to Tindals, 45 to Hatchmen, 20 to Foremen and 22 to Winchmen.

Age

Among the labourers there is no one below the age of 20.

About a little more than 7 per cent. are above 45 and more than 60 per cent. between 31 to 40.¹

The hard labour involved in the work has weeded out old and very young labourers, who are unable to bear the strain. Only sturdy and energetic middle-aged labourers are able to withstand the heat of the sun, and hard work throughout the year.

Community or Caste of Labourers

Until recently on account of religious susceptibilities, Hindu workers did not like to work on board a steamer ; whereas Muslim workers were quite willing to do so. In due course, they formed themselves into a "Guild" and would not admit an outsider. Recently, however, the Hindu labourers accept work on ships, and we find about 30 per cent. of them working side by side with Muslim labourers.

No special training is required for the work of a Stevedore labourer. After some experience one can render efficient service, provided he is strong enough to withstand the hard nature of work involved. Consequently many immigrants from various parts of India, who come to Bombay for one reason or another, try to seek employment as Stevedore labourers. A little acquaintance with the Tindal makes it easy for one to get some work.

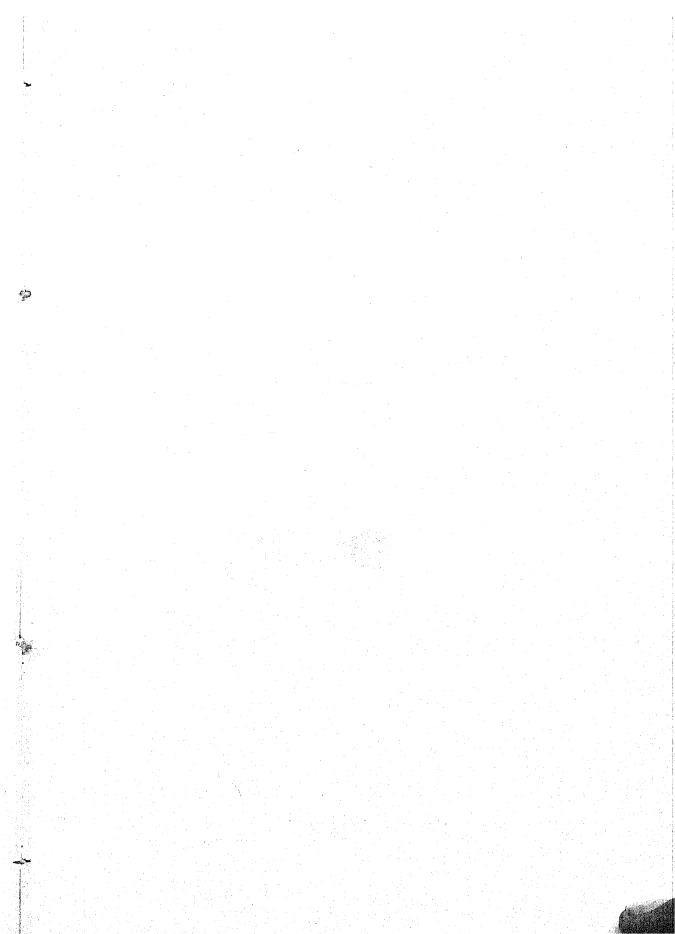
Birthplace

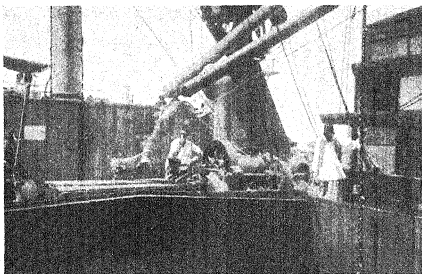
Out of the total number of labourers only 28 per cent. belong to the Bombay Presidency. The rest come from various other provinces of India. The maximum percentage (46 per cent) is from United Provinces. These facts reveal the tendency amongst the immigrants to seek employment as Stevedore labourers.

Original Occupation

Some of these labourers, who leave their homes at an early age, hardly go back to their native country, and in course

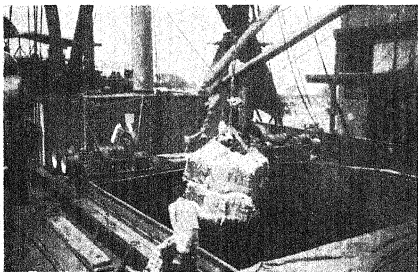
¹ Though the percentage is given in the tables correct upto one decimal point, it is mentioned in the body of the book in round figures.





1. Winchman and Foreman.

[See page 31.



2. Lowering of cotton bales into a hatch.

[See page 32.

of time cease to maintain any connection with their relatives, with the result that they do not remember any relatives at all, except some casual friends or acquaintances in Bombay. The small agricultural plot of land their parents may have left for them, is soon taken away by relatives or creditors. Consequently more than half the labourers have no plot of land at all. The rest are all agriculturists. Some of them have very insignificant plots, or only a share in the field or its produce. Many Tindals, however, who have opportunities of making money in Bombay, possess larger plots of land, about five bighas or so in area.

Nature of Work

Of the five types of Stevedore Labourers, the Serang and the Tindal act as intermediaries ; and their work is to supervise other labourers. The Serang is the organising head who allots gangs of labourers to each hatch, looking to the nature and quantity of the cargo and the time within which the goods are to be loaded or unloaded. About two gangs of six men each work on a hatch, more being added if necessary. It is also a part of the Serang's duty to supervise the work of all the labourers for whom he is responsible, and see that the work goes on smoothly ; but he himself never does any manual labour.

Tindal

A Tindal is not only a middleman between the labour and the Serang but he is also a labourer himself. He often works with the labourers of his gangs, or serves as a relieving hand. His position is that of their leader, and as he is responsible for the work of labourers in his gang, he also supervises their work. He thus works in the dual capacity of a supervisor and a labourer.

Foreman¹

Sanding in the sun all day long near the opening of the

¹ See Illustration No. I.

hatch, a Foreman gives directions to the Craneman or the Winchman as to the movements of the crane of the winch. As neither the Craneman nor the Winchman can see what happens inside the hatch, both of them are solely guided by the directions of the Foreman. Even the slightest mistake on the part of the Foreman would mean lowering the goods at a wrong place inside the hatch, sometimes resulting in serious casualties.

Winchman

Every winch of a steamer is operated by two persons and its work is swifter than that of a crane on the wharf ; so it is often used for quick work. Like the Foreman, the Winchman too has to work in the sun throughout the day.

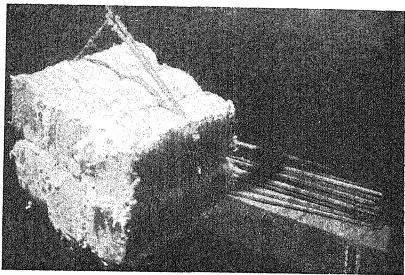
Hatchman

One or two gangs of Hatchmen work inside each hatch. The Hatchmen divide themselves into small groups of two or three persons, and each group ties goods into slings ready to be lifted. Want of sufficient air and light at the bottom of the ship renders the arduous work of a Hatchman quite uncomfortable.

Danger at the Place of Work

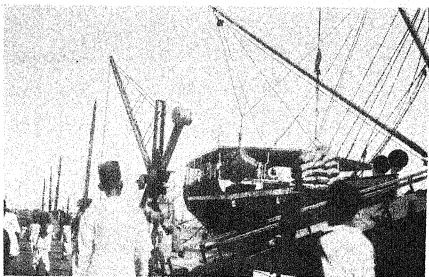
Though no special danger is attached to any particular type of work, yet the place where the Foreman or the Winchman works throughout the day is to a certain extent hazardous. The Foreman stands near the opening of the hatch, and the Hatchman works at the bottom. Every few minutes some cargo swiftly passes over the head of the Foreman, and down it goes into the hatch swinging and dashing against the sides of the hatch.¹ The Hatchman at the bottom is not sure where exactly the goods will fall, so he has often to go below the deck of the hatch to protect himself. Breakage of the chain of the crane any moment, or even a slight mistake on the part of either the Foreman

¹ See Illustrations Nos. 2 and 3.



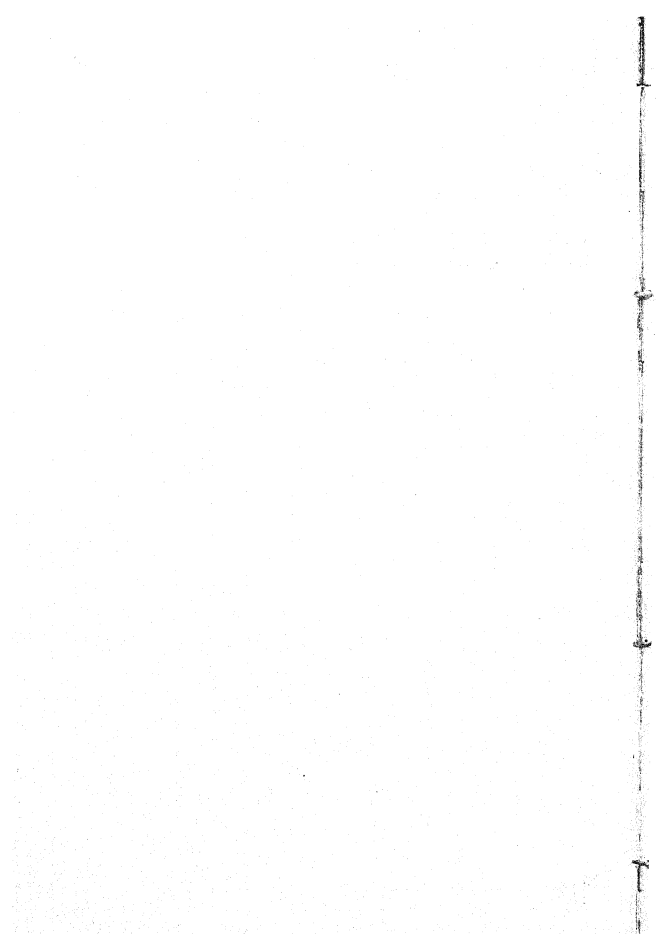
3. Cotton bales inside a hatch.

[See page 32.]



4. Winch and Crane working simultaneously.

[See page 33.]



or the Craneman, would mean certain death for the Hatchman. Even the Foreman has to take care of the swings and jerks of the crane, else he would be thrown overboard. This danger is greatly enhanced when both the crane and the winch are working at the same hatch,¹ for then it appears as if the work is being carried on with maddening speed. Though lighting arrangements are made for night work, light is hardly sufficient inside a hatch. Night-work thus adds to the danger.

Protective Measures

The chain-testing department of the Port Trust tries to minimise the accidents due to breaking of chains, by testing the chains used and certifying their capacity. The public moving about the wharf are warned of the danger while loading or unloading work is going on, by notices placed on the wharf by the Port Trust. As a rule no outsider is permitted to go on board the vessel while the work is progressing.

Working Hours

The usual working hours for labourers in the docks are from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. with one hour's recess at 12-30 p.m. The night shift begins from 7 p.m. and continues up to 3 a.m. The same working hours apply to Stevedore labourers but when these labourers go to work in stream, they have to leave the shore at about 6-30 a.m. or 7 a.m., and return in the evening about an hour after the usual working time, and on some occasions even later.

Night Shifts

Due to heavy dock charges and the anxiety to keep to their time-table, vessels are often in a hurry to load or unload; consequently night shift is very common in the docks. Every labourer gets night work for about two to three days in a month. It is not unusual to employ for night-

¹ See Illustration No. 4.

work a labourer who is working during the day. Thus a labourer may have to work consecutively for two days and the night in between. One can understand such a practice being followed in cases of emergency; but when a large number of labourers are available who are searching for work, one fails to understand why a rule should not be made to employ fresh labourers for every shift, whenever possible.

Wages

All these labourers are employed on daily wages, and the remuneration is fixed per each gang. The employer pays the Serang at the rate of Rs. 10-8-0 per day per gang, out of which the Serang receives about eight annas per gang for himself; and pays the remaining ten rupees to the Tindal for distribution amongst his labourers. The wages of individual labourers are fixed by the Tindal, who pays them between Rs. 1-4-0 to Rs. 2 per day. With a view to get something for himself the Tindal so fixes the wages of the labourers of his gang that he can pocket for himself about Rs. 2 to Rs. 2-8-0 per day. The Winchman and the Foreman are not included in the gang of a Tindal. They are employed separately and get about Rs. 1-4-0 per day.

To ascertain the monthly income of a labourer one has to ascertain the average number of his working days. Though the actual number of working days per month may differ in individual cases, the majority of them are agreed in saying that on an average they get work for 12 to 15 days per month, including night work. Calculating on the basis of an average of 14 days per month, the monthly income of a Tindal would come to about Rs. 35, that of a Hatchman between Rs. 17 to Rs. 28, and that of a Winchman and a Foreman to about Rs. 17.

Monthly Expenditure

The standard of living of a person would depend on the income, and the number of dependents. With a high in-

come and few dependents the standard is bound to improve, provided the person does not develop spendthrift habits.

Having already considered the question about income, it is but proper to find out the dependents on labourers to correctly visualise the mode and standard of living.

Dependents on Labourers

Many of these labourers seem to have left their homes at an early age to run away to Bombay on some pretext or the other. Due to their continuous stay in Bombay, broken only by a casual visit to their villages, they cease to have any affinity with their relatives at home and possess little or no property in their native land. Soon they forget their relatives and their relatives forget them, and consequently the chances of marriage in their villages become remote ; the only alternative is to find a bride in Bombay which task would be very difficult on account of the caste system, unless the labourer has sufficient money to attract one. Hence due to a large proportion of unmarried labourers, we find that about 50 per cent. of the total number of labourers have no dependents at all.

Of the remaining 50 per cent., nearly 40 per cent. have their families in their villages, while only 10 per cent. have their families in Bombay. The reason why these labourers stay alone in Bombay is that they cannot afford to stay permanently with their families in Bombay. Occasionally when they are able to save some money they send some remittance to their family, or keep their family in Bombay and send them back again when they are short of funds.

Size of the Family

Though ordinarily a family consists of two to four members, those having only one dependent form 15 per cent of the total. Even though most of the labourers come from different parts of India, their habits and mode of living are not fundamentally different. Living side by side, day in and day out, and having little of family traditions because of their

emigration from home in childhood, they seem to have adopted a common mode of living, differing from each other in minor details only, on account of religion or individual prejudices.

Only 10 per cent of the total labourers, who are staying with their family in Bombay, have separate rooms for themselves. The usual practice amongst about 40 per cent of them is to rent a room or two, and about six to ten persons stay together in the same room, sharing the rent equally. Where the room is big, even twenty to thirty persons are found to live together. Well-to-do Tindals on the other hand, either occupy single rooms or share it with only two or three friends.

The remaining one-half are homeless labourers sleeping on the footpath of Frere Road, or in the neighbourhood under the open sky, or on the veranda of godowns nearby. No thief will covet their belongings, which consist of a dirty bedding, a few old clothes, and a mug or two for drinking water or tea.

Nearly 35 per cent. of the total labourers pay rent between one to three rupees per month, the remaining 15 per cent paying a little more.

Food

Excepting 10 per cent. of the total labourers who are staying with their families, and a few others who prefer preparing their own meals, the rest have their food in some restaurant near the docks or their rooms. In the morning they have tea, with bread and 'Kabab'. The afternoon meal consists of rice and fish ; but in the evening he provides himself with a fuller meal of 'roti' (i.e. bread), rice, vegetable, etc. All this costs about eight annas a day, but the monthly food bill is estimated at Rs. 13, because often they forego a meal or two, or even remain hungry for a day or two, when short of funds during unemployment. A hungry labourer has often to pledge his clothes to a Pathan or a Marwari to borrow some money to feed himself,

Clothing

The ordinary dress of a Stevedore labourer is a 'loongi' or a 'dhoti', a shirt, a jacket or a coat, a cap, and a pair of shoes or 'champals'. Those who can afford to do so keep different sets of clothes for work and for going out. In spite of making purchases in the cheapest market, the annual expenses on clothing come to at least about Rs. 18 per year, the average monthly expense being between one to two rupees.

Tobacco and Drink

Smoking, drinking, and in a few cases even 'ganja' and 'charas', are common among these people; while some of them are addicted to other vices also. These are a set of spendthrift labourers, spending two to five rupees a month on such self-indulgence or at times even the last penny from their pocket.

Total Monthly Expenditure

This detailed study about various items of expenditure has revealed that the average food and clothing expenditure of a Stevedore labourer would come to about Rs. 15 per month, excepting those who prepare their own food. Adding about Rs. 2 to Rs. 5 as minimum sundry expenses for tobacco, drink etc., besides the rent for room, one finds that the average total monthly expense of a labourer varies between Rs. 16 to Rs. 20. Nearly 82 per cent of the total labourers live upon this minimum living standard. The expenses of the remainder, who are either staying with their families in Bombay, or are leading easier life because of their higher income as Tindals vary between Rs. 21 to Rs. 35. Only 2 per cent of them spend more than Rs. 35 per month, but the maximum limit of Rs. 45 is exceeded in no case.

Monthly Surplus or Deficit

About 30 per cent. of the total labourers have a surplus on hand at the close of the month, while about 35 per cent. are able to make both ends meet, but the rest face a deficit,

which varies between Re. 1 to Rs. 15 per month. Out of them only 2 per cent have a deficit of more than Rs. 10 a month, whereas the deficit of about 19 per cent. is below Rs. 6. The labourer tries to stabilise his budget by sending back his family home, otherwise the only alternatives are to incur debt, or to curtail expenses some how.

Turning to the question of surplus, it is obvious that these labourers cannot save any considerable amount. As many as 19 per cent. can save only between one to five rupees, while about 8 per cent. between Rs. 6 to Rs. 10 ; the remaining 11 per cent. of the labourers save upto Rs. 20.

Ordinarily one would expect this surplus to be utilised in improving the standard of living or in remitting the same to their homes for the support of the family. Many of them have no family at all, so in their case the question of sending remittance to the family does not arise ; but those who have a family in the village do send about five to ten Rupees, according to their savings and the requirements at home, either every month or once in two or three months. As to the rest, however, this surplus means simply an addition to their pocket money. Even the highly paid Tindal does not think of improving his standard of living. Being accustomed to the mode of living and habits, which he formed as an ordinary labourer, he finds it difficult to change it for the better.

To the carefree nature of a Stevedore Labourer to economise is to lose the pleasure of life. With a few coppers in his pocket soon after the day's hard work, he feels himself rich enough to spend as he likes. There is no calculation, no worry about the future in his life. Off his work, the labourer goes straight to the Dock-gates meets a friend or two, takes them with him and enjoys a hearty dinner at some restaurant. Then begins his night stroll. After satisfying the Pathan, who welcomes him at the Dock-gates in the evening, and after helping some of his friends who can

praise him for his generous nature, all that remains with him is soon frittered away. Returning from the mid-night stroll with little money in his pocket, the carefree labourer rests his tired limbs on some foot-path or an empty verandah of some godown. Though starvation may stare him in the face economy never appeals to him, and the contented wretch toils from morning till evening just to maintain his very existence. So unsatisfactory is the condition of these labourers that it is time some social worker spent his energies for their uplift.

Indebtedness of Labourers

To find nearly 53 per cent. of the labourers without any debt would be to find out an exception to the proverbial indebtedness of labourers. Far from being a sign of prosperity, the poverty of these labourers is in itself a cause of their freedom from debts. A money-lender would advance large sums only on the security of some moveable or immoveable property ; but who will advance any money to a man who has nothing to give by way of security ? None would advance any sum on the mere personal security of a labourer, and we find therefore that these labourers are not much involved in debt. The cause of their freedom from debt is not that they do not need more money, but that nobody is prepared to advance them large sums.

The small loans, that they require for their day to day needs are borrowed at a very heavy rate of interest of two to four annas per rupee per month from a Pathan or a Marwari, on the pledge of a garment or two. These loans are repaid as soon as they get some work and thus establish a credit, which may help them in getting money when required again. This practice tends to keep the indebtedness of labourers to a low level, and consequently only 10 per cent of them are involved in debt exceeding Rs. 100. Of the rest nearly 30 per cent. owe less than Rs. 51, while the remaining 6 per cent. owe between Rs. 51 to Rs. 100.

This is the life story of a singular type of Dock Labourer. Homeless and miserable; these Stevedore Labourers toil from morning till evening simply to maintain their very existence, with no hope of better prospects, or happiness in life. No wonder they are induced to resort to strikes at the slightest increase in their untold hardships !

CHAPTER IV

SHORE LABOURERS

Meaning of Shore Labourers

The term 'Shore Labourer' includes all labourers who handle cargo on the wharf or in the transit-sheds, while it is being loaded or unloaded ; but it does not include any other labourer working on the shore.

Management and Control of Labour— "Hamallage Department."

Once the goods are safely placed on the shore the Port Trust is in charge of the same, and is held responsible for any subsequent loss or damage. The owner of the goods has got to take delivery within five days from the date of 'General Landing' (*i.e.* the date when the vessel begins unloading, which is declared after half the cargo is discharged). Failure to take delivery in due time means extra wharfage charge for every two subsequent days. In the same way the Port Trust takes charge of the Export Cargo after it is admitted in the docks on presentation of an 'Allow Pass' issued by the steamship companies to the Exporters. As the Port Trust is responsible for the cargo, while it is being handled on the wharf and the transit-sheds, one would naturally expect the Port Trust to be in charge of the Shore labourers who handle the same. Prior to 1914, a private firm was given the contract for the supply of necessary labour and completion of the task ; but since then a new department—Hamallage Department—was opened in view of the growth of trade in the Port and increase in work.

Employment of Labour

To appreciate the present system of employment of labourers by the Hamallage Department of the Port Trust it is necessary to understand the method of employment followed by the private firm prior to 1914. The private firm did not

directly employ the labourers, but entered into sub-contracts with some intermediaries, who brought in the necessary number of labourers and fulfilled their sub-contracts. The Toliwallas, as these intermediaries are commonly called, had each some gangs of labourers of his own, and borrowed others of his friends to meet the required demand of labour whenever he got the contract. On the abolition of the system of entering into contract with the private firm, the Port Trust did not abolish the method of giving sub-contracts to the Toliwallas, but retained the practice of employing labourers indirectly through them.

Toliwalla

The Hamallage Department of the Port Trust maintains lists of various types of Toliwallas, and calls upon them in turn to supply the necessary number of labourers as each vessel is ready for loading or unloading. On a request being made to the Hamallage Department by the steamship companies for the supply of labour, what the Hamallage Department has to do is simply to call upon the Toliwalla and give him instructions as to the nature of the cargo, and the time limit within which the work is to be completed. Efficient in his job the Toliwalla knows how to manage the rest. With the necessary number of labourers the Toliwalla attends the vessel and allots necessary gangs to handle the cargo discharged by each hatch.

Classification of Labourers

The work of Shore labourers can be divided into two stages, *viz.*, that of carrying goods from the wharf to the transit-sheds and that of sorting out the goods, getting them tallied with the General Manifesto, and stacking them. Those, who work on the wharf, are again sub-divided into two groups. Some of them handle only bag cargo, while others handle all the sundry cargo. The former are known as Matari labourers while the latter as Boy labourers. The work of sorting out and stacking is carried out by quite a

different set of labourers, called Stackers, who work inside the transit sheds.

Besides these there are a few other labourers who attend to particular jobs only. Some of them unload the cargo from carts, lorries, or railway wagons, as they arrive in the docks, and are designated Cart unloaders. It is an art to handle cotton-bales, and only a few experienced labourers, better known as Cotton exporters, are able to pick up the job. The rest are sundry coolies and Muccadums employed by the Hamallage Department for other odd jobs. Thus we have in all six types of Shore labourers, *viz.*, (1) Boy labourers, (2) Matari labourers, (3) Stackers, (4) Cart unloaders, (5) Cotton exporters, and (6) Sundry Coolies.

Total Number of Labourers and Schedules

There are in all about 100 gangs of Boy-labourers and 34 gangs of Matari labourers. Each gang of the former consists of 12 persons, and that of the latter of 16 persons. The approximate strength of the Boy labourers, therefore, would be 1,200 men and that of the Matari labourers 550 men. The Stackers number about 100, Cart unloaders 150, Cotton exporters 100 and Sundry coolies and Muccadums 200. This brings the grand total of Shore labourers to about 2,300 persons.

One hundred and eighty schedules were filled in from these labourers, which represent 7.8 per cent. of the Shore labourers. Out of the said schedules 74 refer to Boy labourers, 47 to Matari labourers, 10 to Stackers, 15 to Cart unloaders, 12 to Cotton exporters, and 22 to sundry coolies and Muccadums.

Age Composition

Nearly three-fourths of the total labourers are between 26 to 40, the maximum percentage (26 per cent) consisting of those between 31 to 35. Of the remaining one-fourth also, half the number is between 21 to 25. This shows the energy and the strength of the labourers, necessary for the hard work they have to put in.

Community or Caste of Labourers

As already indicated in the previous chapter, the Hindu workers prefer work on the shore rather than on board the vessels. It was due to this reason that we found that most of the Stevedore labourers were Mahomedans. For the same reason we find that most of the labourers on the shore are Hindus. About 96 per cent. of the Shore labourers are Hindus while only a few (4 per cent.) freshers are Mahomedans. Amongst the Hindus too, 78 per cent. of the total belong to the Maratha caste, and the rest to the Mahar caste. Mahars work generally as Matari labourers, and the unity amongst them is so strong that no outsider can come in to share their work. The main reasons attributed to this sort of unity are firstly the peculiar hard nature of their work, and secondly the unique method of dividing their wages, both of which will be discussed in due course. Even the Marathas try to follow the same policy of preventing the admission of an outsider, who is not known or related to them; but of late a few Mahomedans have been able to make their way through, and obtain work as Boy labourers.

Birthplace

In contrast to the birthplace of the Stevedore labourers, one finds here that almost all the labourers belong to the Bombay Presidency. A vast majority of Shore labourers (92 per cent.) come from Poona, Satara, Ahmednagar and Sholapur districts. Labourers from Poona and Satara alone are about 49 per cent. and 24 per cent. respectively. The remaining labourers are from various other districts and Indian States such as Hyderabad and Kolhapur. Though the Marathas are scattered over various districts, a vast majority of the Mahars belong to the Satara district. There is no particular district to which the Muslims belong; they come from various parts of the country.

ORIGINAL OCCUPATION

Causes of Migration

With the exception of about 14 per cent. of the labourers, every labourer has some plot of agricultural land in his native village, and a small house or hut of his own. He may be either an absolute owner of the plot or may have a share in the ancestral fields. Any way he has an interest in agriculture, and agriculture is his occupation. It forms an important source of income for his family, and but for this additional source of income at home, he would not have thought of leaving the family in the village. The produce of agricultural fields, however, being insufficient, it becomes necessary for some adult male member of the family to find some other work for the support of the family. The labourer supplements the income of his family by sending remittances from his savings occasionally.

Size of Agricultural Plots

The Plots of land are of varying quality and size. The average size of an agricultural holding is between 1 to 5 bighas. Most of the labourers possess plots of this average size, but a few rich Toliwallas and others have larger plots, about 10 bighas or more in size.

The main produce of these fields are Ground-nuts, Rice, Javar, Bajari, Usa, Bavadi, and Maize. The fields are looked after generally by male members of the family at home, or by the relatives in their absence. The labourer visits his village at least once a year to arrange for the cultivation of his land, and for repairing his hut just before the monsoon sets in. In case there is no one else to attend to the fields, the labourer has to spend the whole of the monsoon in his village.

The vagaries of nature being proverbial, often when there is scarcity of rain, the produce is so little that the labourers are unable even to pay revenue to the Government. To meet the agricultural losses, and for the maintenance of the

family, the moneylender has got to be approached. This adds to the financial burden on the fields, and often the moneylender insists on a share in the agricultural produce instead of charging heavy rates of interest. After making allowance for all these deductions, one can easily realise how much is left for the support of the family.

NATURE OF WORK

Boy Labourers

As the name would suggest, these labourers are not really young boys, but are all grown-up men like the rest, and it is interesting to know the origin of the term. When the trade of the Port had not completely developed, only a few Shore labourers, mostly Matari labourers handling bag-cargo, used to work on the wharfs. These labourers were accompanied by some young boys, who used to help them in lifting light packages. In course of time when the trade of the Port prospered, these boys were replaced by young labourers, but even to this day they are addressed as 'Boys'.

The Boy labourers handle all sorts of cargo on the wharf excepting bag-cargo. Each gang divides itself into small groups while at work. One or two labourers are busy unslinging the cargo from the crane, while some help in lifting the same, and others carry it inside the transit-sheds, at times on small hand-carts (hath-gadies). As the work requires no special skill or tact, the newcomers find it easy to pick up the work, and consequently the unemployed from other industries often try their hand at the job.

Compared with the Stevedore labourers, the Shore labourers have to work under safer and better surroundings.

The labourers on the wharf can easily see where and when the crane will discharge the cargo, and can protect themselves. The Craneman himself can see them working on the wharf, and so the danger of accidents is not so great as in the case of Stevedore labourers who generally work on board a vessel. The shade of transit-sheds is a great relief

to those who work on the wharf in sun and rain, which advantage is denied to the Stevedore labourers.

Matari Labourers

Though less than half the total strength, compared to the Boy labourers, the Matari labourers are no less important for the efficient working of the port. Being exclusively employed to handle bag-cargo, especially that of sugar and rice, and as the trade in these items is limited and seasonal, the Matari labourers get spasmodic work. It is not possible to disband some of them during the slack season, and give regular work to the rest ; because once set at large, they would go to their villages and return whenever convenient to themselves, with the result that they will not be available when required and it is not possible to replace them at short notice.

To carry bags, weighing five to six maunds each, easily on the back all day long, requires an experienced labourer. It is for this reason that some gangs of labourers have always got to be kept ready. The difficulty does not arise with Boy labourers for they can be replaced without difficulty.

The method of work is not different from that of the Boy labourers, but it is interesting to observe the peculiar method of counting the bags. As each labourer passes on with a bag on his back, one small boy, seated on his way with small cane-sticks, gives him a stick and another boy a little further off receives the same. After every hundred bags the small sticks are exchanged, and again the process continues. The conditions under which these labourers have to work are similar to those under which the Boy labourers work.

Stackers

The number of Stackers is small as only about a dozen of them are required to attend to each steamer. The work is not so very hard but is somewhat intelligent, for they have to sort out the goods according to the number, marks, etc., on the packages, and get them tallied with the 'General Manifesto'. They work under the shade of the transit-sheds.

Cart Unloaders

Cart unloaders are required only for export purposes and their duty is to unload carts or wagons in the docks. Their work is neither continuous nor regular, and so, when free, these labourers work as Boy labourers.

Cotton exporters

It is an art to place about four cotton bales in the sling of a single iron chain, so that no bale can slip out inspite of jerks and jolts it receives when it is lifted and carried into the hatch.¹ The Cotton exporters, as these labourers who handle cotton bales are called, have acquired the knack of achieving this feat.

Sundry Coolies and Muccadums

These labourers, as will be presently seen, are all directly employed by the Hamallage Department, on daily wages. Some of them are Muccadums, whose duty it is to supervise the work of Shore labourers of the various gangs and inform the department of any defects in the same. The rest of them are employed on some odd jobs such as carrying messages or instructions to the gangs, etc.

It is apparent that the work of both the Stevedore labourers and the Shore labourers when corelated forms one continuous process divided into various stages. From the moment the Hatchman handles the cargo, till it is finally stacked in the transit-sheds, it has at different stages, either directly or indirectly, to be handled by separate sets of labourers. The work of any one set is as important as that of any other for maintaining a continuous process, and the speed of work of each set has got to be adjusted with that of the preceding or the subsequent set. Consequently slackness on the part of any of the sets is bound to be detected directly on the accumulation of cargo at any particular stage of the process of discharge ; therefore harmonious working between the various sections

¹ See Illustration Nos. 2 and 3.

of the Stevedore and Shore labourers is essential to effect the speedy removal of the cargo.

Wages

All the Shore labourers, excepting the sundry coolies and muccadums under the Hamallage Department, are employed indirectly through the Toliwallas, who act both as sub-contractors and intermediaries. As sub-contractors, they enter into contract with the Hamallage Department at piece-work-rate on tonnage handled and receive payments on completion of work. It is upto their discretion to employ individual labourers and settle their wages.

A novel method prevails amongst the Matari labourers and Cotton exporters of settling the wages of individual labourers. These labourers are not employed by the Toliwalla on daily wages, but the remuneration of each gang is fixed according to the work put in. It is then divided equally amongst them reserving a double share for the Toliwalla. The system looks like a profit sharing partnership, and it encourages them to harder labour ; for the harder they work the greater will be the share of an individual. The extra remuneration of their hard labour would thus return to them, instead of filling the pockets of the Toliwalla. Though the share of an individual labourer may differ slightly from day to day according to the work put in by his gang, on an average a Matari labourer approximately makes about Rs. 2-8 per day and a Cotton exporter a little more than a rupee.

The daily earning of a Boy labourer is about a rupee ; and that of a Stacker, a Cart unloader and a Muccadum under the Hamallage Department is about Rs. 1-8, whereas the coolies under the Hamallage Department receive only 15 as. per day.

As the daily earning of a Toliwalla could not be definitely ascertained or the average number of days for which he could get work, only his monthly income is mentioned.

In arriving at the approximate number of days during which a labourer would get work, enquiries were made not only about the Toliwallas and the individual labourers, but also about the Hamallage Department.

On an average a Boy labourer can get work for about fifteen days in a month, including two to three days' night work. As already mentioned the work of the Matari labourers is very limited and so they hardly get work for more than ten days in a month. The work of the Stackers and the Cart unloaders is more or less regular due to their limited number, and consequently their average working days come to about 18 and 20 days respectively. The Cotton exporters on the other hand can be kept busy only between 12 to 15 days in a month. The Muccadums and coolies directly under the Hamallage Department are lucky to get work almost throughout the month; deducting Sundays in a month, and the casual leave they may enjoy, it would be safe to reckon their working days between 20 to 22 days. Night work has been included in the number of working days mentioned above.

Calculating on the above basis one finds that the average monthly income of a Boy labourer comes to about Rs. 15, that of a Matari labourer about Rs. 25, and of a Stacker about Rs. 27. A Cart unloader and a Muccadum under the Hamallage Department earns about Rs. 30 a month, while a Cotton exporter and a coolie under the same department earn about Rs. 20 and Rs. 19 respectively.

The monthly income of about 38 per cent. of the total labourers is Rs. 21 to Rs. 30, while only 8 per cent. can earn above Rs. 30. The latter class consists chiefly of Toliwallas, who have opportunities to pocket much more than other labourers and out of these Toliwallas about 3 per cent. can make as much as Rs. 41 to Rs. 45 per month. From the remaining nearly 29 per cent. have an income of Rs. 11 to Rs. 15 and about 24 per cent. Rs. 16 to Rs. 20 a month.

Monthly Expenditure

The Shore labourers lead a simple and modest life, excepting the few Toliwallas who spend rather freely. Yet there is not much diversity in the habits and mode of their living because of the fact that they were born and brought up under the same traditions. Though a Toliwalla earns more than others, he does not spend this higher income so much on improving his standard of living, as on his wasteful habits. A vast majority of the labourers come principally from the same districts, and also belong to the same castes. Some of them are even related to each other. The common surroundings and traditions under which these labourers were born and brought up have developed in them inherent habits, which it is difficult to shake off in later life.

Dependents

In contrast to the Stevedore labourers we find amongst the Shore labourers that only about 5 per cent. of the total are without any dependents at all. As many as 85 per cent. of the labourers have dependents varying from one to five. The maximum percentage (20 per cent.) is of those having three dependents. Only 1 per cent. of the labourers have eight to ten dependents, while about 6 per cent. have six dependents.

About 52 per cent. of the labourers live in Bombay alone, leaving their family in the villages. However 33 per cent. of the labourers do stay in Bombay with their families and about 10 per cent. have some of the members of their families with them and the rest in the villages.

Rent

It is convenient at this stage to study their life in Bombay. Many of the labourers who are alone in Bombay prefer boarding with a friend or a relative. There are some widows, who maintain such boarding houses, where eight to ten boarders take their meals ; but only one or two such boarders can stay with a family. The usual charge for a

boarder is Rs. 10 per month. Some of these boarders rent a room in common between four to six persons and each one may have to pay two to five rupees a month by way of rent. But a vast majority of these boarders do not rent any room at all. They keep their luggage in the room where they board and sleep outside the room on the verandah or the streets, and thus have to pay nothing by way of rent. The rest of the labourers who stay with their families in Bombay, have to rent a room. The rent varies from one to ten rupees a month according to the size, convenience and situation of the room. There are some chawls built by the Port Trust at Wari Bunder for the convenience of the Shore labourers and the rent charged for each room is Rs. 5-8 or even less per month, according to the size of the room. Each room has a window at the back and a lobby in front, and is quite decent ; and so nearly half the Shore labourers prefer staying in these chawls. Hardly any one occupies more than one room.

It was found that each room was occupied by about 7 to 8 persons at a time, consisting of the labourer, his wife, their two or three children, their parents, sisters or brothers and even one or two boarders, who for all practical purposes are treated as inmates of the house.

Food

There is practically no difference between the diet of a Toliwalla or an ordinary coolie ; no distinction exists between the labourer's family and their boarder. Early in the morning at about 5-30 or 6 a.m., the women prepare some bajri-bread or wheat-chapati and some vegetable for the morning breakfast for the whole family. The labourers have to carry with them the same food for their mid-day meal ; but a full meal consisting of 'chapati,' 'vegetable,' 'dal' or 'curry, and rice', awaits them in the evening, and on holidays. Usually the Marathas do not eat non-vegetarian food, but the Mahars do not object to the same. Though many

of them are fond of tea, and cannot do without it both in the morning and the afternoon, the Matari coolies take milk in the morning. To a boarder it costs only Rs. 10 per month for his food, and to a family of two to three persons at least Rs. 16 to Rs. 20. As it is always profitable to maintain one or two boarders, the practice of keeping such boarders is very common amongst the labourers.

Clothing

The normal yearly requirements of a male are two pairs of 'Dhoties', four shirts, some underwears, two turbans, a coat, and a pair of champals, costing in all Rs. 20 to Rs. 25. A female requires about three 'Sarees' and four to six bodices yearly, worth Rs. 15 to Rs. 20. Besides these the expenses incurred on clothing their children and other dependents, if any, should also be reckoned.

Luxuries

The expenses on tea should normally be taken under the heading of food rather than luxuries in these days, when it is more a necessity with many of us; and these labourers are no exception to the rule. Besides as the tea drinkers, (if one may be permitted the use of the phrase) are often fond of bettle-nuts and smoking, and as it is not feasible to separate the expenses on each individual item, the expenses on tea are considered under this heading. The monthly expense on tea etc., varies with individual cases, but the average expense is Rs. 3 to Rs. 5. Some of these labourers are also in the habit of smoking 'ganja' and 'charas' while some also indulge in alcoholic drink once or twice a week. An ordinary labourer spends, per month, two to five rupees on luxuries, while a Toliwalla spends even more.

Total Monthly Expenditure

The monthly expenses on food, clothing and pocket expenses amount to about fifteen rupees in the case of each of those labourers who stay alone in Bombay. Add to this the monthly rent and the increased expenses due to the stay of a family

in Bombay, to ascertain the monthly expenses of those who keep their families in Bombay.

The minimum monthly expense of a single labourer as a boarder with some family comes to about Rs. 15. Nearly 37 per cent. of the total labourers live on this barest minimum. About 19 per cent. spend a bit more, either by way of rent, or on better nourishment and luxury. Matari labourers especially spend more on milk, which is an important part of their diet. The total monthly expenses of these 19 per cent. vary from Rs. 16 to Rs. 20. The expenses of the Toliwallas and persons staying with their families in Bombay are still higher, and about 28 per cent. spend from Rs. 21 to Rs. 30. The remaining 16 per cent. cannot keep their expenses within these limits and spend, in a few cases, as much as Rs. 56 to Rs. 60.

Monthly Surplus and Deficit

That there exists frugal habits amongst these labourers is evident from the fact that nearly 36 per cent. of them show a surplus budget, while nearly 30 per cent. do not exceed their income. The surplus varies from Re. 1 to Rs. 20; the maximum percentage (21 per cent.) is composed of those who save Rs. 6 to Rs. 10, per month.

Only about 34 per cent. of the labourers have to face a deficit, which is less than Rs. 11 in the case of 20 per cent. of the labourers, while it is Rs. 11 and more with the remaining 14 per cent. To make up the deficit some of these labourers send back their families to their respective villages, if they are staying with them in Bombay, and thus curtail the expenses. The Toliwalla, who lives in the hope of better prospects, is at times not afraid of incurring lavish expenses, and involves himself in heavy debts.

The accumulated surplus, on the other hand, is remitted to the village for the maintenance of the family, or kept in Bombay, if the family is due to come to Bombay in a short time. The remittance is usually sent regularly every month, but

many prefer sending substantial amounts every two or three months. Sometimes when they go to the village they carry with them articles purchased in Bombay, and spend a happy time with the families, after a hard life in Bombay.

Indebtedness of Labourers

In spite of the fact that these labourers are frugal in their habits and can save something every month, one would be surprised to find them involved in heavy debts ; and in this respect they form a good contrast with the Stevedore labourers. These debts are incurred for agricultural and social purposes, such as a marriage in the family, repairs of the house, bad harvest etc. The moneylender advances large sums only on the security of some immoveable or moveable properties, and charges interest at times as high as 25 per cent. per annum. The securities soon prove insufficient as the labourer is unable to keep pace with his increasing liabilities, and the moneylender satisfies the debts by selling those securities and crediting the sale proceeds.

No doubt about 29 per cent. of the labourers have no debts at all, but about 52 per cent. are involved in debts exceeding Rs. 100, while the rest do not incur such large debts.

CHAPTER V

COAL LABOURERS

One of the important items of trade of the Port is coal, as can be seen from the following figures of Imports and Exports of coal :—

Imports and Exports of Coal (In Thousands of Tons) at Bombay Port from 1924 to 1934¹

1 Year	2 Imports	3 Exports
1924-25	309	175
1925-26	293	154
1926-27	299	179
1927-28	341	177
1928-29	241	148
1929-30	349	163
1930-31	178	141
1931-32	190	62
1932-33	186	37
1933-34	163	34

Besides, bunkering coal in steamers is also an activity of the Port, as evidenced by the following table showing shipment of coal bunkered at Bombay.

¹ B.P.T. : 'The Port of Bombay' Appendices.

Imports and Exports of Coal (In Thousands of Tons) at Bombay Port from 1934 to 1939

Year	Imports	Exports
1934-35	197	30
1935-36	184	23
1936-37	174	21
1937-38	60	82
1938-39	147	40

**Shipment of Coal (In Thousands of Tons)
Bunkered at Bombay Port
from 1924 to 1933¹**

1 Year	2 1,000 Tons
1924	64
1925	126
1926	155
1927	143
1928	132
1929	156
1930	148
1931	223
1932	221
1933	214

Work scattered over three places

The activities of Coal labourers are scattered over three regions, *viz.* in the stream, in the docks, and at the storing depots at Darukhana to the East of Reay Road Station. Coal steamers as a rule do not discharge coal in the docks, for coal dust would not only spoil the cargo and properties of the Port Trust, but would also have injurious effects upon the health of the public in the docks.

Incidentally, we may point out that the wharfage of annas ten per ton makes the price of coal almost prohibitive. This may be one of the reasons why coal steamers discharge coal only in the stream, about half-a-mile or so away from the docks. Bunkering of coal in the steamers however has got to be permitted in the docks ; as otherwise, it would cause great inconvenience and waste of time, if steamers were compelled to bunker coal in the stream. Bunkering can be carried on very conveniently and economically while the steamer is being loaded or unloaded. Besides, the whole job takes about

¹ Government of India : Indian Coal Statistics, 1933, p. 59.

half a day, and the quantity of coal handled while bunkering is comparatively not so large as to prove a nuisance to the docks.

The storing depots for coal at Darukhana are the third centre of activity for Coal labourers.

Colliers

No special steamers are required to serve as colliers ; but ordinary cargo steamers can be used. The only precautions necessary are that these steamers have to be washed before loading any other cargo, and that no other cargo can be loaded simultaneously with coal. Generally all the decks of the hatches of the steamer are filled with coal of different qualities, divided in lots, according to ownership.

Stevedore Firms

Some of the Stevedore firms, who undertake the work of loading or unloading other cargo from steamship companies, also enter into contracts for discharging coal and bunkering coal in steamers. In some instances these contracting firms, who are also coaldealers, discharge not only their own coal but also that of other dealers and firms. Often they supply their own coal for bunkering.

Employment of Labour, Head Muccadam

Though the system of employment of Coal labourers resembles that prevailing amongst Shore labourers, there is an appreciable difference between the two methods. Every Stevedore firm, which undertakes such contracts, has its own Muccadam, who acts as a sub-contractor for the supply of labour and completion of the work. It is the function of the Muccadam to bring the necessary number of Coal labourers, to supervise their work, and to see that it is completed in time. Once the sub-contract is given the Stevedore firm has not to worry at all about anything except to pay the Muccadam on completion of the work. The Muccadam, who is entrusted with all the work connected with the labourers engaged by him on behalf of a firm is called a Head Muccadam to distinguish him from other Muccadams of the gangs of

Coal labourers. Often the Head Muccadam serves as a sub-contractor to more than one firm.

Gang Muccadam

The Head Muccadam, however, does not employ the labourers directly, but employs them through other Muccadams, each one of whom has about 20 to 30 men under him. This intermediary, the Gang Muccadam, though technically a mere leader is virtually their master. He receives payment from the Head Muccadam at a fixed scale per labourer, but fixes the wages of the individual labourers under him according to their ability.

Recruitment

The labourers are directly recruited by the Gang Muccadam from his own native village or from neighbouring villages, and are either related to him or belong to his own caste. Their social and economic condition is thus well-known to him. The hope of better prospects in a city like Bombay, combined with a promise of a loan for marriage expenses or other social and agricultural purposes, together with travelling allowances, are sufficient inducements to many a labourer to migrate for work to Bombay. The loan thus advanced to the labourer creates a sort of mortal binding on his part to work under the same Gang Muccadam till his debts are fully discharged. This system of recruiting labour also avoids the tendency amongst labourers to migrate from one Gang Muccadam to the other, when there is a rise in the daily rates of wages due to a sudden rush of work. The Gang Muccadam is not bound to give them work but he only gives them preference whenever there is work. Again the wages are not paid in cash at the end of each day or month, but are credited to the account of the individual labourer, allowing him to draw for his maintenance only, and utilising the surplus towards the repayment of the loan received by him. Thus the Gang Muccadam combines in himself the function of a moneylender with that of a recruiting officer of labour.

Migratory Character

The Muccadum and his men are attached not to one Head Muccadum or firm only, but go wherever they find work. In some cases where a Muccadum himself serves as a Head Muccadum, he has to seek the assistance of other Muccadums for the supply of more labourers.

Total Number of Labourers and Schedules

As already observed the work of these labourers is scattered over three regions, *viz.*, in the stream, in the docks, and at the Darukhana. Though the nature of work at all the three places is practically the same, the labourers working at Darukhana do not like to go to work on colliers; nor does the work of bunkering coal in steamers attract them, unless when higher wages are offered to them in cases of emergency. There is however some difference in the method and conditions of work at the three places, which is the main reason why labourers working at any one place do not like to shift to the other.

In the absence of any definite figure about the total number of labourers, it is possible to give only an approximate figure. There are about 1,500 labourers working on colliers in the docks, and about 500 labourers work at Darukhana.

Out of the 110 schedules filled in from these labourers, representing 5.5 per cent. of the total number, 80 schedules refer to the labourers working on colliers, and the remaining 30 refer to those working at the Darukhana.

Age

The age of the labourers varies from 16 to 50, the majority (54 per cent.) being between 31 and 40. Only these middle-aged healthy labourers are able to bear the strain of hard labour such as shovelling coal, and working in the hatch. The youngsters, who are novices or juniors, and the aged, who think of retiring, are given light work of carrying baskets from one place to the other. Besides there are some young energetic women carrying coal baskets side by

side with others ; and their work is in no way inferior. These women are either newly married young wives having no children, or widows who have to maintain children and have nobody else to support them. The young married women are thus a source of supplementary income to their husbands, and the widows are the bread earners for their family.

Caste

The fact that as many as 98 per cent. of the total number of labourers are Mahars, indicate that this occupation is a monopoly of that caste. There is, however, a negligible percentage (2 per cent.) of Muslims, who have been working with the Mahars for a long time, and are very much the Mahars in their mode of life and general behaviour.

Birthplace

These labourers belong mainly to three districts, Satara, Poona and Sholapur. Nearly three-fourths of the labourers (76 per cent.) hail from Satara. About 21 per cent. are from Poona and the remaining come from Sholapur. A study of the birthplace also shows that there is a tendency amongst labourers coming from the same districts to work at the same place. The great majority of coal labourers from Satara district prefer work on colliers in the stream or on board other steamers when bunkering coal ; whereas those from Poona are more inclined to work on shore at the Darukhana. This tendency also accounts for the fact, already noted, that labourers working at the Darukhana do not like to work on colliers in the stream, except on high wages in cases of emergency.

Original Occupation

As in the case of Shore labourers, here too, the labourers are agriculturists, and seem to have migrated to Bombay for similar reasons. Most of them have a plot of land or some interest in land ; and the average size of the plot is less than 5 bighas. The plots of majority of the labourers are of the average size, whereas a few labourers including rich muccadums possess larger plots, exceeding even 10 bighas in size.

Nature of Work

Though the general nature of work on colliers in the stream, at the docks, and at the Darukhana is similar, there is an appreciable difference between the various stages through which the work that is being carried out at these three places, and the conditions under which the labourers work.

Coal Dust

Generally speaking, one can say that all these labourers have to work in coal dust more or less, throughout the day ; and therefore, while at work they merely put on a 'langot' or a loincloth round their waist, and another piece of cloth on the head, which piece is also tied to the nose to prevent coal dust from being inhaled. The women, of course, put on their usual dress, but in addition tie a piece of cloth over their noses for similar reasons.¹

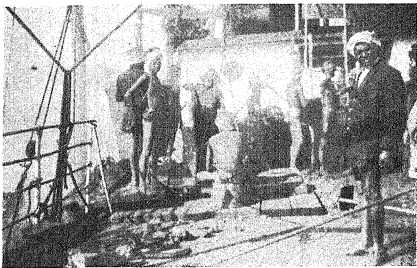
Work on Colliers

Work on colliers in the stream consists of drawing out coal from the hatch, and after weighing it, discharging the same in barges waiting alongside. As soon as coal is discharged in barges its possession changes, and the responsibility of the steamship company ceases.

The work of discharging coal can be divided into two stages, firstly that of shovelling coal and filling the baskets inside the hatch, and secondly, that of carrying these baskets on board, weighing the coal and discharging it in barges waiting alongside. The labourers accordingly divide themselves into two sets, each one attending to the work at one stage only.

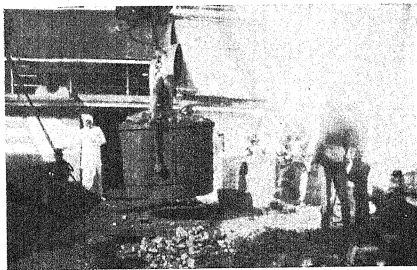
The work at the first stage is very difficult ; so, only stout, hardy, middle-aged labourers attend to it. The work of shovelling coal and filling baskets is so hard that the labourers get tired after filling in a few baskets, and at the close of the day their hands just refuse to work. They have

¹ See Illustration No. 5.



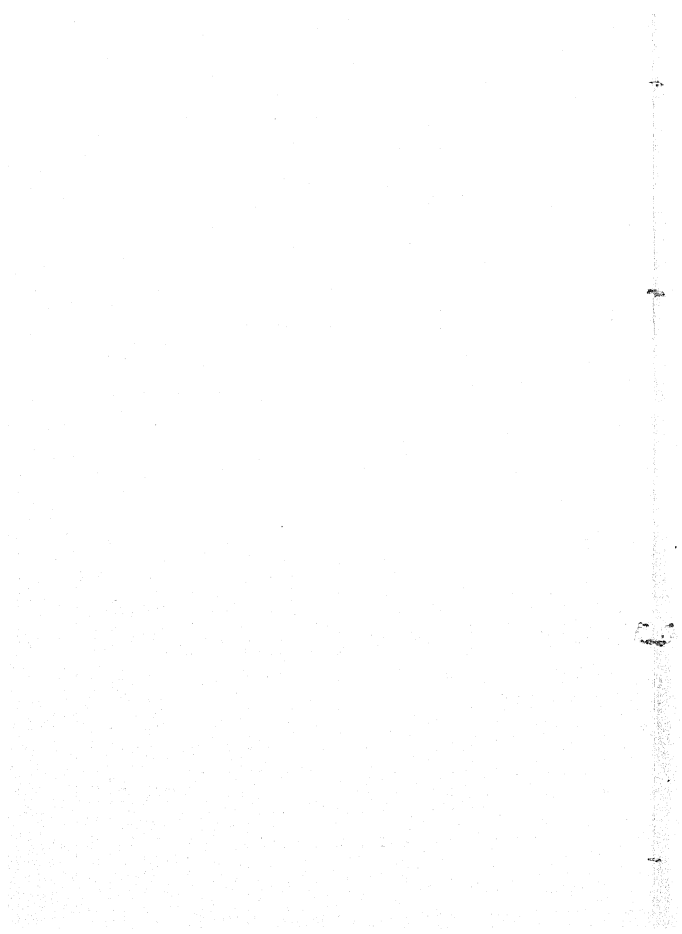
5. Work on Colliers.

[See page 62.]



6. Iron tub filled with coal.

[See page 63.]



to take rest after filling in every few baskets. However this is not all. As already observed, every Coal labourer has to work in coal dust, but the coal dust on board the colliers is so dense that one cannot return from board a collier without getting some of it on his clothes and face. It is denser still in the hatch, where the sun's rays cannot penetrate even at noon, and in the pitch darkness, in the hatch, the labourers have to work somehow. Under the circumstances, only those who have good physique and considerable experience can do the work; and hence middle-aged stout labourers alone work in the hatch.

The Falka and the Tub Systems

The work at the second stage consists of carrying these baskets from the hatch to the weighing machine on board the steamer, where coal has to be weighed before being discharged in barges waiting alongside. The baskets are carried from the bottom of the hatch to the opening of the hatch by what is known as the "Falka System." Planks are suspended by ropes inside the hatch at such convenient heights, that a labourer, standing on any plank, can receive a basket from the labourer on the lower plank by slightly bending down, and can deliver the same to the labourer overhead. The labourer stands where he is, but the basket passes from one person to the other till it reaches the opening of the hatch on board the steamer. On board however each man carries the basket to the weighing machine. This system of bringing the baskets from the hatch is known as the 'Falka System' as distinguished from the recently introduced 'Tub System'. Under the 'Tub System' a big iron tub is filled with coal inside the hatch, which is lifted by the winch of the vessel, and placed on board.¹ Though this latter system is more economical, in so far as it replaces all the labourers working on the 'Falka' (the planks on which they stand and work inside

¹ See Illustration No. 6.

the hatch), it is more dangerous. Often when the empty tub is lowered in the hatch, the labourers inside the hatch are unable to make out where the tub will fall due to the darkness. There is always some possibility of accident due to the falling of the tub on the labourers working below. Only the shouts of the labourers near the opening of the hatch warn the labourers in the hatch of the lowering of the tub.

The work on the 'Falka' is risky and hard, for it requires some practice to stand on the planks and work ; any inadvertence on the part of the labourer is bound to bring to ground, both the labourer and the basket. The conditions of work on the 'Falka' inside the hatch are the same as those under which labourers inside the hatch shovel coal into baskets ; the only difference being that the nearer one approaches the opening of the hatch, the finer becomes the dust and only the light from above indicates the existence of day. The warm atmosphere of the hatch is cooled by the currents of fresh air from the sea. As inside the hatch, so on the 'Falka' too, only sturdy labourers can do the work. The work of carrying baskets on board the colliers is comparatively lighter and safer work, fit for women and old labourers.

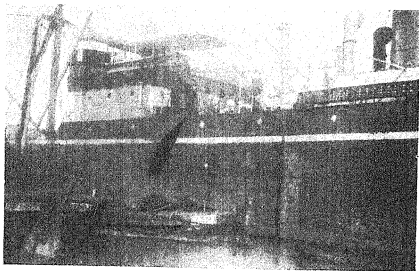
The work of weighing¹ is attended to by about half a dozen intelligent labourers, who know how to use correctly a balance by putting in proper weights, and read the position of the indicator of a spring balance. After weighing is finished coal is discharged into barges waiting alongside.² These barges are then tugged on to the Darukhana if coal is to be stored, or to the docks, in case the work of bunkering coal is ready at hand.

Work at the Darukhana

At the Darukhana, the work of unloading coal from barges and piling it up on the merchants' depots takes at the most

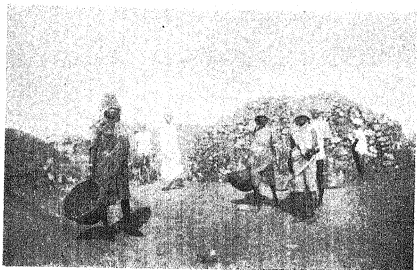
¹ See Illustration No. 5.

² See Illustration No. 7.



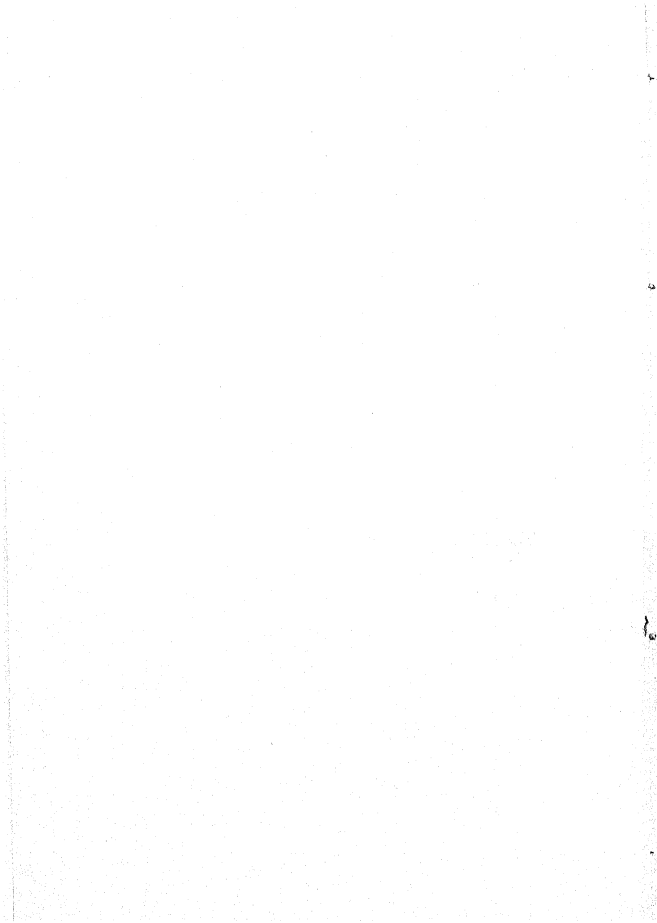
7. Discharging coal into barges alongside colliers.

[See page 64.]



8. Coal storing depots at Darukhana.

[See page 65.]



about half a day. As soon as the barges reach the wharf, some labourers begin shovelling coal into baskets, and others carry them on to the merchants' depots on the shore. These depots are merely open plots of ground.¹ The work of shovelling coal is given to strong, hardy labourers whereas all the rest, including women, carry baskets to the merchants' depots. It is an art to walk—rather to run—on long, narrow planks connecting the barges with the shore² with heavy baskets on one's head, for it is difficult even to balance oneself on these planks.

The conditions of work at the Darukhana are much better than those on the colliers. Coal dust is inevitable wherever coal is concerned, either on the barges or on the shore ; but it is not so dense at the Darukhana as on the colliers. Further the work at the Darukhana is carried on on the wharf in the open air ; so that, there is no complaint of want of fresh air and light as in the hatch of a collier. This is also one of the reasons why the labourers working at the Darukhana are not inclined to work on the colliers.

Bunkering Coal in Steamers

Bunkering coal in steamers is carried on in the docks. Coal required for bunkering has to be brought in barges either from the Darukhana, or straight from the colliers. After the barges are brought alongside the steamer, coal is filled in baskets, which are carried on board the steamers by the 'Falka System' already described, and emptied into the holds of the steamer, where coal is to be stored. The other conditions of work are the same as those on the colliers, except that the coal dust is not so dense ; and as the work is done in open air, there is no room for complaint about fresh air and light.

Working Hours and Night Work

The usual working hours of the docks apply to these labourers, but when they have to work on colliers they have to be

¹ See Illustration No. 8.

² See Illustration No. 9.

away from the shore for a much longer period. Early in the morning at about 5-30 a.m. the labourer presents himself at what is popularly known as 'Colsa Pool' (the place where they are recruited), and is carried in barges¹ from the shore at about 6 or 6-30 a.m. It takes about half an hour to reach the colliers, and the work commences as soon as the labourers are on board the collier. Upto about 12 or 12-30 p.m., they continue to work, when they spend about an hour in taking their meals and rest and again work till 5-30 or 6 p.m. After this the barges bring them back to the shore by about 7 p.m.

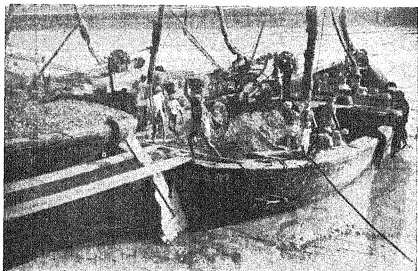
Night work is common on colliers. As it takes a lot of time to bring fresh labourers from the shore, often the same labourers continue to do the night work. We may thus find a labourer working consecutively for two days and the intervening night. It is suggested that it would be better, both for the employer and the employee, if such a practice were discontinued; for the employer would get fresh labourers every time, and the employee could take sufficient rest to be able to work on the morrow.

Though the work on colliers lasts for three to four days, it takes only about half a day or at the most one whole day, to complete the bunkering work. Often when bunkering work is not likely to last long after midday the labourers have to work continuously upto one o'clock or so, without any recess, till the work is completed, and no extra wages are paid for the work so completed. Bunkering is carried on also at night.

Wages

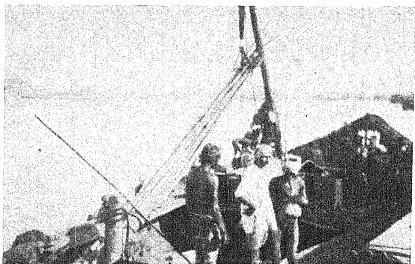
The Head Muccadam, who is virtually the employer of these labourers, pays the Gang Muccadam at a fixed rate per head; while the Gang Muccadam in his turn fixes the wages of individual labourers according to his own discretion. The rate ordinarily varies from one rupee to two rupees per day;

¹ See Illustration No. 10.



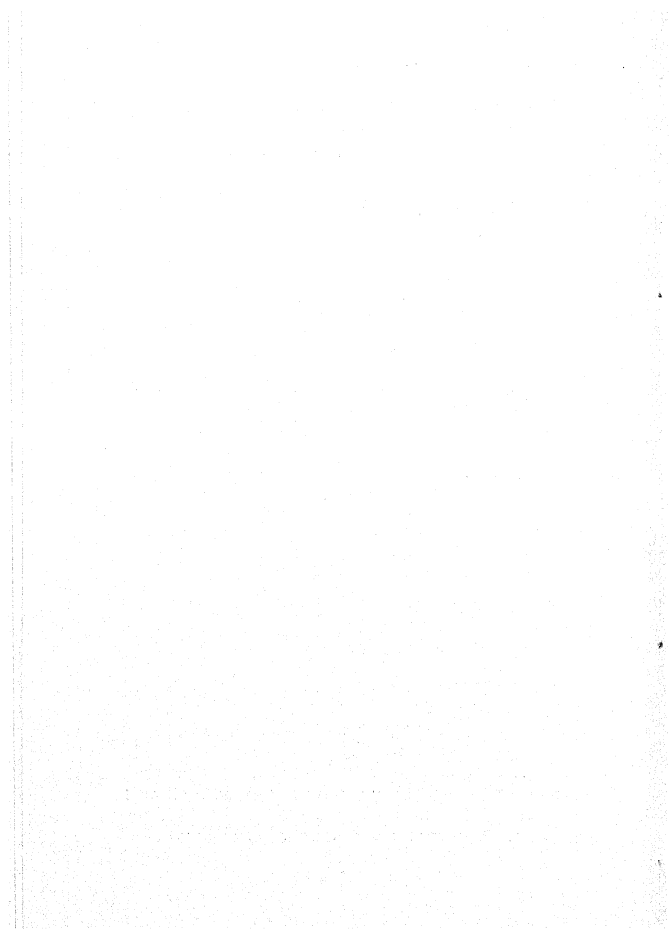
9. Narrow planks connecting barges with the shore.

[See page 65.]



10. Barges carrying Coal Labourers.

[See page 66.]



but during the season, when the demand for labour is great, the rate sometimes rises upto five rupees per day.

Out of the total number of labourers about 64 per cent. receive Rs. 1-12 to Rs. 2 per day; they are sturdy middle-aged labourers shovelling coal in baskets, or working on the Falka. The wages of the labourers attending to the weighing machines are also high, as their work requires more intelligence than any other class of labourers. Out of the remaining labourers about 16 per cent. receive Rs. 1-4 per day, and about 7 per cent. receive only Re. 1 per day. Their work is comparatively light and at safe places and hence the wages are lower. It is also for this reason that the rates of wages at the Darukhana are not as high as on colliers, for the work at the Darukhana is comparatively under congenial circumstances. The wages of women are not different from those of men doing similar work.

Besides five rupees which each Muccadum receives from the Head Muccadum, as a supplier of his own gang of labourers, the Gang Muccadum tries to save as much as he can as a distributor of wages. It is however difficult to discover this ill-gotten gain. The size of the gang of these labourers is not fixed like that amongst Stevedore labourers or Shore labourers; consequently all the twenty or thirty labourers under one Gang Muccadum are considered as forming one gang, and the Muccadum receives only five rupees for the supply of his labourers. The Gang Muccadum also tries to make the best of his position as a money-lender. He pays only a part of the wages to the labourer, sufficient for his maintenance, either daily or after two or three days, and credits the surplus against the loans advanced to him.

Monthly Income

The demand for these labourers is not only seasonal, but varies from day to day according to the arrival and departure of the colliers and other steamers requiring coal for bunkering in the docks. Hence it is difficult for these labourers to

get regular work. The trade in the commodity too is limited. Taking all these factors into consideration ten days have been taken as average working days, including night-work. This figure has been arrived at after consulting many labourers and Muccadums, as also the representatives of the employers.

Calculating on the above basis, we find that the monthly income of about 63 per cent. of the labourers is Rs. 16 to Rs. 20, while only a few Muccadums earn about Rs. 50 per month. Out of the remaining labourers about 24 per cent. of the total earn Rs. 11 to Rs. 15 ; the rest from the lowest strata, Rs. 10 per month.

Dependents on Labourers

About 73 per cent. of the labourers leave their families behind in the village and stay alone in Bombay : while about 8 per cent. have some members of their families in Bombay. Only about 17 per cent. live in Bombay with all the members of their families.

In contrast to the irresponsible nature of some of the labourers mentioned in the previous two chapters who are without any dependents at all, one finds here that most of these labourers have some dependents. The majority of them have between one to five dependents, the maximum percentage (23 per cent.) being of those having two dependents only. Next comes the percentage of those (20 per cent.) having three dependents, and about 16 per cent. have only one dependent. The remaining 15 per cent. have more than five dependents.

Rent, Food, Clothing and Luxuries

The habits and the mode of living of these labourers are so similar to those of the Shore labourers that it would be a mere repetition to describe in detail their expenditure on rent, food, clothing and luxuries. It would suffice however to remark that the living quarters of the majority of these labourers are scattered over all the city and consequently the rents are neither fixed nor uniform. The average rent for their rooms

varies from three to seven rupees per month. The practice amongst these labourers staying alone in Bombay is to rent a room in common for about half a dozen persons and share the rent amongst themselves equally. Some of the boarders, however, do not like to spend anything on rent, and prefer sleeping outside the rooms where they take their meals.

Total Monthly Expenditure

Nearly 75 per cent. of the labourers spend Rs. 11 to Rs. 20 per month. Many of those who fall under this class stay alone in Bombay, or have only a small family in Bombay and live very frugally. Out of the remaining 25 per cent. nearly 10 per cent. spend a little more, while the expenses of the remaining 15 per cent. are still higher. This may be due to their habits, or to the fact that they have a large family to support in Bombay. The rich Gang Muccadums belong to this class, and in a few instances the expenses reach a high limit of Rs. 61 to Rs. 65 a month.

Monthly Surplus or Deficit

The percentage of those having a surplus budget every month exceeds the percentage of those having one with a deficit. The reason is that they work hard, and live on the barest minimum. This is why they live alone in Bombay, leaving their family in the village. For some time, they stay with their family in Bombay, and as soon as they find themselves involved in debt, they send the family back to their village, and thus try to curtail expenses. They may as well ask themselves whether the prize for which they voluntarily leave their village homes is worth the reward.

Again let us look at their surplus. What is the amount after all that they save? Nearly 53 per cent. of these labourers have a surplus from their earnings of one to five rupees, and only about 4 per cent. can save Rs. 11 to Rs. 30.

On the other hand nearly 24 per cent. have to face a monthly deficit of Rs. 5, about 14 per cent. a deficit of Rs. 6 to Rs. 10, and the remaining 7 per cent. bear a still higher loss.

Are they in a position to bear this monthly loss, when one considers their monthly income and the chances of making up the loss at any future time? For nearly more than half the month, they have to sit idle and even when they get some work, they do not receive all that they earn. The Gang Muccadum, under one pretext or the other, does not pay them their full wages, and consequently compels them to live upon the barest minimum. The position to which they are thus reduced is no better than that of slavery under the Gang Muccadum, from whose moral and material obligations they can never dream of setting themselves free.

Remittance to Their Homes

In spite of all this, these labourers have to send something to their families at their native village, either every month or once in two or three months. If the labourer cannot save anything, he has to borrow from others, but he must send something for the maintenance of his family.

Indebtedness of Labourers

The debts considered herein include not only those incurred in the village for social and agricultural purposes, but also the amounts the labourers owe to the Gang Muccadum. With the exception of about 11 per cent. of the labourers, who are free from any debt, the rest are involved in some debt. Only about 17 per cent. owe less than Rs. 100, while about 52 per cent. have larger debts not exceeding Rs. 500. About 14 per cent. owe from Rs. 501 to Rs. 1,000 and a little more than 6 per cent. have still larger debts, extending in some cases to the tune of two to three thousand rupees.

In summing up the economic conditions of Coal labourers, one cannot help remarking that in spite of hard labour and frugal habits these labourers are far from happy. Two factors are mainly responsible for this unsatisfactory state of affairs. One is the lesser number of working days, which goes a long way in reducing their monthly income. Another point to be noted is the way in which the Gang Muccadum

pays the wages to the individual labourer. Whatever little the labourer can earn is not directly paid to him by the Gang Muccadum, but is credited to the account of the individual labourer against the loans that might have been obtained by him from time to time. He is allowed to draw only what is just sufficient for his bare existence. Thus a Coal labourer is unable to receive the full benefit even of his little income, and well may he rue the day he rushed to Bombay in the hope of better prospects, leaving his home and family behind.

CHAPTER VI

LABOURERS ON WATER

Labourers Employed In Other Activities

Having completed the survey of the principal Dock labourers, we now proceed to deal with labourers employed in other activities of the docks. Though these labourers never handle any cargo directly, they facilitate the work of principal Dock labourers by lending their services to the various activities of the docks, and thus form an indispensable part of the Dock labourers. But for the services of every single section of them, the work in the docks would be nearly impossible. Consequently every labourer, who works in any one of these activities, is entitled to be called a Dock labourer, and therefore labourers under the different departments of the Port Trust, who attend to these activities, are included in our study.

Direct Employment

The labourers considered so far are all employed through intermediaries, such as a Serang, a Toliwalla or a Muccadam. As the employment of labour is indirect, the employers neither manage nor control labour directly. But the labourers, now under consideration, are all directly employed and controlled by the Bombay Port Trust, through its various departments.

Skilled and Unskilled Labourers

Another interesting point to be noted with regard to these labourers is that all of them are not unskilled labourers as in the case of the principal Dock labourers. Consequently wages of skilled labourers are much higher than those of unskilled ones. The higher wages depend more or less upon the apprenticeship and skill required for the job. This difference in wages tends to create a clear distinction in their mode of living and habits of life. A labourer working as a

Khalasee can rise to higher and higher position by his skill and experience, till finally when he becomes a Serang ; his standard of living is bound to change with the gradual rise in his wages and position. He would spend more on his food, clothing and luxuries, and lead a more comfortable life than that of an ordinary Khalasee.

Yet there are many characteristics common to the labourers working in the same place—be he a skilled or an unskilled labourer. Working side by side all day long, in the same place or under similar circumstances, each one has a similar outlook on life. It is for this reason that we decided to study the remaining labourers in different groups divided according to the region of their work. Those who are working on water, for instance, are put together in one group ; those working on shore in the other, and a third comprises of all those working on land. Labourers working under the different departments of the Port Trust have been put under one group or the other accordingly as they fit in the above scheme. The table in Chapter III regarding classification of labourers shows also the departments included in each group.

Labourers Working on Water

Labourers working at different places on water and under similar conditions on shore nearby, are included in this group. Nearly 60 labourers altogether work at Kennery and Prongs Lighthouses, on the Pilot Vessel, Lady Wilson and at the Port Signal Station. The various tugs and launches belonging to the Port Trust necessary for piloting and berthing vessels and for other purposes, give employment to about 250 Flotilla Crew. The services of Shore crew, about 140, are of no less importance in docking and undocking, as well as berthing vessels. Besides these about 200 labourers are employed on Dredgers working in the Port.

Dredgers

Dredgers constitute an essential part of the equipment of

the Port of Bombay. Many rivers, which rise in the Western Ghats have their mouths at the harbour, the most important being the Panvel, the Amba, the Pen and the Patalganga rivers. During the monsoon these rivers carry considerable quantities of silt and deposit a large part of it into the Dock Approach Channels, with the result that the navigable depth of the Channels is curtailed to the extent of as much as four to five feet in the course of a year. This necessitates continuous dredging operations by the Port Trust, as shown by the following table giving the actual tonnage dredged during a period of four years since 1930-31 :—

Table Showing Actual Tonnage Dredged¹

1	2
Year	Tonnage
1930-31	2,807,725
1931-32	2,480,000
1932-33	2,827,920
1933-34	4,711,420

Salvage Barges

Connected with the Dredgers are two Salvage Barges, employed for finding out lost cargo under water, construction of foundation work, and any kinds of repairs under water to vessels and other dock gears. About 50 men work on these barges and they are grouped together with the labourers on the dredgers for our study.

Total Number of Labourers and Schedules

The total number of labourers working on water comes to about 700. Due to the variety in the types of labourers and the places of work, it has been found necessary to raise the percentage of schedules filled in at various places from different types of labourers, to ensure sufficient data for reliable conclusions. We obtained schedules from amongst these

¹ The figures were supplied by the department concerned.

labourers representing 21.4 per cent. of the total because of similar reasons.

The following table shows the important types of labourers concerned, and the number of schedules filled in from each type :—

Number of Schedules Filled In			
I		2	
Types of Labourers		Number of Schedules	
1.	Serangs .. ..	..	13
2.	Engine Drivers .. ..	..	12
3.	Greasers .. ..	..	5
4.	Firemen, Stockers, etc. ..	..	20
5.	Seacunnies .. ..	..	7
6.	Tindals of Khalasees .. ..	..	13
7.	Khalasees, or Lascars .. ..	..	56
8.	Cooks .. ..	..	10
9.	Winchmen .. ..	..	8
10.	Signalmen .. ..	..	6
Total .. ..		..	150

Age

A great majority of the labourers are between the age of 26 to 45, the maximum percentage (28 per cent.) being of those between 31 to 35. About 23 per cent. of the labourers are between 36 to 40, while about 18 per cent. are between 26 to 30 years. The youth and energy of the labourers thus guarantee their fitness for work on water, at all seasons of the year. The novices are between 16 to 25, and form about 7 per cent. of the total. Some experienced labourers (9 per cent.) between 46 to 50 are indispensable in cases of emergency.

Community or Caste of Labourers

Our remarks in connection with the Stevedore labourers, that Muslim workers prefer work on water, while Hindu

workers prefer work on the shore, apply equally to these labourers. Here too, we find that about 84 per cent. of the total labourers are Muslims. The hard life at sea, with no regular diet as obtainable on shore, is unsuitable to Hindu workers on account of their religious susceptibilities. Even out of the remaining 15 per cent. of the total who are Hindus, nearly 10 per cent. are Kolies (or low caste Hindus). Only 4 per cent. of the total are Marathas, while the remaining 1 per cent. are Bhandaries, serving as cooks. Thus the labourers in this group belong to either of the two communities, the Muslim or the Hindu ; the only solitary exception is that of an Indian Christian, who serves as a cook.

Birthplace

Though the work of these labourers is scattered over various places, it is interesting to note that they belong practically to the same parts of the Bombay Presidency. The two main places from which 91 per cent. of the total labourers have migrated are Ratnagiri (68 per cent.), and Janjira (23 per cent.). The tendency amongst labourers from the same parts to take up similar jobs in urban areas can be noticed here. Out of the remaining 9 per cent. who do not belong to the Presidency, about 3 per cent. of the total are from Chittagong in Bengal, and about 3 per cent. hail from the Laccadive and Maldivé Islands.

Original Occupation

Only about 11 per cent. of the total labourers are without any property in their native village, while about 23 per cent. have both a house and a plot of ground for agriculture. The latter section of the labourers are definitely known to be agriculturists. As to the rest it is difficult to make any remarks with certainty. Though all of them have a small house of their own at home, they neither possess any plot of land nor have they any interest in land. Further they have been in the employment of the Port Trust for a long time and their visits to the village are occasional. Hence it is diffi-

cult to make out their original occupation. Some of them claim to be fishermen, while some say that they are born Khalasees.

Nature of Work

The various types of labourers involved in this group are Serangs, Engine Drivers, Winchmen, Seacunnies, Firemen, Greasers, Tindals, Khalasees, Cooks and Signalmen. Some of these labourers are skilled and others are unskilled. Engine Drivers are for instance, skilled labourers, while Khalasees and Cooks are unskilled labourers. But there are some other types of labourers, in whose case it will be noticed that those at the top are skilled ones and those at the bottom are unskilled. The Serang of a stream vessel, who may be in charge of more than a score of men under him, possesses greater skill and ability than a Serang of a small stream-launch, having under him at the most about half a dozen sailors. Though both are called Serangs, their wages and their mode of living differ considerably. A Khalasee, who enters the service as an unskilled labourer, rises by experience to the post of a Tindal, and finally after years of service he attains the job of a Serang. The whole process is slow and steady, and there is no minimum standard of skill and experience to distinguish the skilled from the unskilled labourers. There is no point of time at which a labourer ceases to be unskilled, and enters the rank of a skilled labourer. It is all a question of individual ability ; some pick up the job easily, while others take a pretty long time to get accustomed to the same job. Under the circumstances we have to turn to their wages and find some figure which may be taken as a line of demarcation between the skilled and unskilled labourers. Considering the labourers of all the groups now under study, we have fixed Rs. 40 as a line of demarcation. All those earning Rs. 40 and less are classed as unskilled labourers, while those whose monthly income exceeds that amount are classed as skilled ones.

Serang

The Serang is the head of all the staff on board each vessel, tug, launch, or dredger.¹ The Shore crew are also under a Serang. Everywhere a Serang is the head of all the labourers, and his job is that of controlling and instructing them. In this respect he resembles a Muccadum, or a Tindal amongst the principal Dock labourers ; but a Serang on board a vessel has also some skilled labourers under him unlike a Muccadum or a Tindal.

Engine Driver, Greaser, Fireman, etc.

All these labourers have to work side by side in the engine-room. The most intelligent of the lot is the Engine driver, who works the engine according to the instructions of the Seacunny. Next in rank comes the Greaser, who has to see that all the parts of the engine and other machinery are properly greased and work smoothly. The Fireman keeps proper steam in the boiler, the Stoker shovels coal into the furnace, and the Coal trimmer breaks coal into small pieces. The latter two are simply manual labourers. The heat of the engine and the noise of the machinery all day long quickly tire a visitor, but it takes much longer to fatigue the accustomed nerves of these labourers. However the signs of exhaustion cannot be indefinitely concealed.

Seacunny² and Winchman

The Seacunny weilds the destiny of a ship ; and upon him depends the life of the ship and all her immates. Sitting at the helm—alert and active—the skillful Seacunny safely navigates the vessel throughout the year, irrespective of fair or foul weather.

The winches of the dredgers are continuously at work, lifting buckets full of slit from the bottom of the sea, and emptying them into barges waiting alongside the dredgers.

¹ Some dredgers are in the charge of a "Master."

² The Indian word for helmsman, which has become current.

Working the dredger buckets, day in and day out, the Winchman maintains the navigable depth of the channels and the docks.

Tindal, Khalasee and Bhandari

'Khalasee', 'Deck hand' or 'Lascar' are the various terms current for the same class of labourers. A Khalasee or a Deck hand on board a vessel is often termed a Lascar amongst the Shore crew. This class of labourers have to do all sorts of manual work either on board a vessel or on the shore, wherever they may be employed. The Lascars, are mainly concerned with docking or undocking a vessel as well as berthing the same.

The immediate head of the Khalasees on board is often a Tindal, who himself is under the control of the Serang. He is generally selected from amongst the Khalasees themselves, and is often the best of the lot. Like a Serang, he has to instruct his inferiors and exact work from them. Though he has no skilled labourers under him, his own work requires some skill and experience, and thus enables him to be grouped amongst the skilled labourers.

A Bhandari is a cook, but he has the privilege of being addressed as a Bhandari by all other labourers on board or on the shore.

Signalman

The wireless installations at Kennery Island, Prongs Lighthouse, Pilot Vessel—Lady Wilson, and Port Signal Station at Ballard Pier are controlled by Signalmen. Their duties are to receive and transmit weather reports and other messages, and hoist proper storm signals on receipt of information. There are very few signalmen, since their work is limited to the aforesaid four places only. These Signalmen are intelligent workers and are classed as skilled labourers.

Working Hours

The working hours of the labourers in this group are not regular like those of the principal Dock labourers ; but are

determined more or less by changes in the tide, and the time of arrival or departure of vessels. The Alexandra Dock is open for all the twenty four hours of the day, but the Victoria and Prince's Docks can dock or undock a vessel only after half the tide has set in. In the same manner many a time the dredgers can be worked only in low tides. Consequently the working hours of many labourers in the group change from day to day. However a working day is reckoned as consisting of nine hours. Further as the sole guiding factor of working hours in many cases is the change in the tides, it is not possible to distinguish between work during the day, and at night. They work according to the tide irrespective of day or night. But where the working hours are not determined by the changes in the tide, the usual working hours of the docks apply.

Wages

Unlike the principal Dock labourers, these labourers are all regularly employed from day to day by the Port Trust. They form the temporary staff of the Port Trust labourers, as distinguished from Casual labourers under the Hamallage Department, and are employed for the efficient working of the docks. Their services are necessary and well defined and due to the nature of their work, which requires apprenticeship and skill, it is desirable to have some permanency among the employees. With a view to ensure this they are employed on monthly wages in some cases, and the scheme of Provident Fund serves the same purpose.

Not only do the monthly wages of various classes of labourers in the group vary according to the nature of the work of each class, but amongst the labourers of the same class the wages are not the same. There exists a gradation in the wages of labourers of the same class. The following table shows the monthly wages of different classes of labourers in this group, with the maximum and minimum wages in the same class.

The Maximum and Minimum monthly Wages of Labourers

Types of Labourers	Maximum		Minimum	
	Monthly wages		Monthly wages	
1. Serangs	150	..	35
2. Engine Drivers	122	..	55
3. Signalmen	87	..	34
4. Winchmen	70	..	33
5. Firemen, etc.	68	..	27
6. Seacunnies	68	..	30
7. Tindals of Khalasees	55	..	32
8. Greasers	40	..	36
9. Khalasees	34	..	21
10. Bhandaries	26	..	20

Applying the standard of distinguishing the skilled labourers as those earning more than Rs. 40 per month, we find that, about 30 per cent. of the total labourers are skilled and the remaining 70 per cent. are unskilled.

The maximum percentage (8 per cent.) amongst skilled labourers is of those earning Rs. 66 to Rs. 70 a month, while the maximum percentage (27 per cent.) amongst the unskilled is of those earning Rs. 31 to Rs. 35. Only 1 per cent. earn less than Rs. 21 a month, but about 10 per cent. make Rs. 21 to Rs. 25. Then comes the class of those, earning Rs. 26 to Rs. 30, which is 22 per cent. of the total, and combined with the aforesaid 27 per cent., they form nearly half the total strength.

Amongst the skilled labourers nearly 11 per cent. earn Rs. 41 to Rs. 65 a month, while nearly 9 per cent. earn upto Rs. 100. Only about 2 per cent. of the total top the list of monthly wages, their income varying from Rs. 101 to Rs. 150.

Monthly Expenditure

The great difference between the monthly income of the skilled and the unskilled labourers is bound to have some

effect on their standard of living. Though the habits of the two classes are not substantially different, there is yet a marked difference in their standard of living. The skilled labourers who earn more, spend more on their comforts and conveniences. The comparatively better room, more nutritious food, and decent dress of a skilled labourer make him the envy of many an unskilled labourer, and serve as an impetus to work harder and attain his status.

Dependents

Not a single labourer in this group is without any dependent. The maximum percentage (28 per cent.) is of those having three dependents, the majority having three to five dependents.

In spite of having families in their village, and in spite of the fact that they are, in many cases, in a position to maintain them in Bombay, the majority of these labourers prefer staying alone leaving their families at home. One of the reasons, which checks them from calling their families to Bombay, is the irregular nature of their work. Being required to go to work at odd hours on water, these labourers feel it an additional burden to look after the family. They find it much more convenient to attend to their work any time when called upon if they are staying alone in Bombay, rather than with their families. As many as 93 per cent. of the total labourers stay alone in Bombay, while only 5 per cent. stay with the whole of their families in Bombay, and about 2 per cent. have some members of their families in Bombay.

Rent

The Port Trust has provided free quarters for some of the labourers, whose work requires their presence at any time, as in the case of Shore crew or the labourers who have to stay away from the shore, as on Pilot Vessel—Lady Wilson and the two Lighthouses. In the latter case even food is supplied free by the Port Trust. A few labourers however stay on barges, where they work. They have made them their homes.

Yet all these labourers and all those, who are not provided with any accommodation by the Port Trust, are required to arrange for some room with their friends in the city. The usual practice amongst these labourers is to rent a big room in common for some ten to twenty people, each paying a rupee or two by way of his contribution towards the rent of the same. Only a few occupy small rooms between two or three persons, each one paying about two to five rupees as rent. Some highly paid skilled labourers, and those with the families in Bombay have separate rooms for themselves and pay higher rents.

Food

While working on water, many of these labourers cannot return to shore for their tea or meals, and so the Port Trust provides for such labourers Bhandaries (cooks), who prepare tea and food for all the skilled and unskilled labourers on board the Dredgers and other Flotilla. Thus each one has the convenience of having tea or meals on board as he likes, so long as he is working on water. The Bhandaries have to prepare food for these labourers according to the instructions, and the labourers have to pay for what they partake on board. Consequently, the cost of meal on board varies in individual cases, the skilled labourers usually spending more than the unskilled ones. In the morning at about 6-30 a.m. they have tea and chapati ; at about 11 o'clock rice, vegetables, fish, and dal are served as lunch ; and in the afternoon again at three o'clock, they have tea and biscuits. Those, who so desire, can eat their evening meals also on board at about six. But usually these labourers like to go to the city in the evening as soon as they are free from work and take supper at some restaurant. In this way each of them takes his meals partly on board a vessel and partly on shore. The cost of food, per month, on board comes to about Rs. 6 to Rs. 8 and the same amount is spent on shore. The monthly expenditure on food of an average unskilled labourer is about Rs. 15, while that of a

skilled labourer is more, and at times works out to even twenty five to thirty rupees. Those labourers, who stay with their families in Bombay, no doubt, spend more.

Clothing

The usual dress of a Khalasee on work, consists of blue coat and trousers, a shirt, an underwear, a small red cap, and a pair of shoes. All this costs on an average about Rs. 2 a month, but the highly paid skilled labourers, who are often well dressed, spend more than fifty to sixty rupees a year.

Luxuries

One has to add to these expenses about two to five rupees at least, as the monthly pocket expenses, on tea, bettle-nuts, tobacco, drink etc., and such expenses on luxuries, as in other cases, rise with the rise in wages, and reach the limit of ten rupees or more in some cases.

Total Monthly Expenditure

Calculating on the above basis, we find that the monthly expenses of nearly 67 per cent. of the labourers vary from Rs. 21 to Rs. 35, the maximum percentage (36 per cent.) being of those spending Rs. 21 to Rs. 25. Only 17 per cent. of the total labourers spend more than Rs. 35 a month. This class consists of skilled labourers, and some of those unskilled labourers, who live with their families in Bombay. An equal percentage of labourers spend less than Rs. 21 a month. Some of them are frugal, while some are provided with free quarters by the Port Trust. Those labourers, who work on the Lighthouses and on the Pilot Vessel are supplied free board and lodging by the Port Trust ; and their monthly expenditure is Rs. 6 to Rs. 10, which amount is spent on their personal requirements.

Monthly Surplus and Deficit

With higher wages and comparatively few expenses, these labourers, most of whom stay alone in Bombay, are expected to save something at the end of every month and not to have any deficit. This surplus varies from Rs. 16 to Rs. 30

with about 65 per cent. of the labourers, and the maximum percentage of savings (36 per cent.) are Rs. 21 to Rs. 25. About 8 per cent. can save only Rs. 6 to Rs. 10, and amongst this class may be included the poorly paid labourers, and some of those with higher expenses, due to their families staying in Bombay. The savings of other skilled labourers are decidedly larger, which in a few instances are as much as Rs. 75 to Rs. 80 a month.

A part of these savings is remitted to the village for the maintenance of the family either by small regular monthly instalments, or in larger sums, once in two or three months. The small remittances are Rs. 5 to Rs. 10, while there is no limit to larger amounts. However, one should note that an important part of their savings is swallowed up in the repayment of debts, and usurious rates of interest.

Provident Fund

The rules of the Provident Fund are made under Section 22 of the Bombay Port Trust Act, 1879, for the benefit of certain servants classed as temporary employees. Rules are also made for the payment of gratuities to such employees who do not elect to join the Provident Fund.

The servants of the Port Trust are admitted to the benefits of the Provident Fund from 1st of April 1920. The object of the Fund is to provide employees of the Port Trust on their retirement, or their dependents on their death with a certain lump sum of money, which would be readily available. Experience has shown the value of such a fund. Briefly the system by which such a lump sum is accumulated for each employee is as follows :—

Each employee is required to set aside from his pay a certain fixed percentage. These compulsory savings accumulate and at the close of each official year the Board of the Trustees of the Port of Bombay contributes an amount equal to the employees' contribution during the year. The whole sum together with interest thereon is available for payment to the

employee or his dependents in accordance with the rules made by the Board, on the retirement or death of the employee.

The rules provide that the employee's own contributions may under certain conditions be advanced to him during service in case of illness or for building a house. These advances are recoverable by the Board, by deductions from the pay of the subscriber to whom it is made, by monthly instalments, of such amount as may be fixed by the Board. The monthly instalments are not more than Rs. 20 and Rs. 48 according as the advances are made for defraying the expenses during illness or for building a house.

All temporary employees are eligible to subscribe to the Provident Fund with effect from the date of completing 3 years' continuous service, with the exception of casual labourers, such as those under the Hammalage Department. Contributions are to be made by all subscribers at the uniform rate of $8\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. of their pay calculated as follows :—

- (a) In the case of employees paid at the monthly rates the calculation is made on the total pay excluding overtime ;
- (b) in the case of employees paid at daily rates the calculation is made on the daily rate of pay multiplied by the number of days worked during the month upto a maximum of 26 days, and excluding all time worked in excess of that number.

Upto the 31st of March 1927, interest was allowed on all the contributions made by the subscribers and also on the Board's contributions together with accrued interest thereon, at the rate of $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. per annum, but since the 1st of April 1927, this was altered to the actual rate earned by the Trustees from the Provident Fund Investments.

Though a subscriber is eligible to contribute to the Provident Fund after completing three years' service, he has to put in five years' service in order to entitle him to receive his share of the Board's contributions ; the Board's share of such

contribution and interest thereon however is credited to the subscriber's account in the ordinary way. Payments are made within three months from the date of retirement or death of the subscriber.

With the exception of the 21 per cent. of the total labourers, who are freshers, the rest are old employees of the Port Trust as can be seen from their large Provident Fund. Nearly 40 per cent. of the labourers have at their credit Rs. 101 to Rs. 500 in the Provident Fund, while about 6 per cent. have less than Rs. 100. The Provident Fund of about 15 per cent. varies between Rs. 501 to Rs. 1,000, whereas that of 15 per cent. is Rs. 1,001 to Rs. 2,000. Only about 3 per cent. have a still larger Provident Fund, the maximum amount being Rs. 4,500.

Payment of Gratuities

Temporary employees, who complete 3 years' continuous service on or after the 1st of July 1926 are allowed the option of subscribing to the Provident Fund or of qualifying for a gratuity, under "the rules made for payment of gratuities to temporary employees who do not elect to join the Provident Fund". The Board may at their discretion, upon the retirement of an employee, grant to him or in the event of his death while in the employ of the Board, to his widow and/or children dependent upon him, a gratuity equal to one month's actual pay (excluding overtime) at the date of retirement or death, for each complete year of service not exceeding 30 years in all. No gratuity is granted to an employee, who has put in less than 15 years' service and unless his service is certified by the Head of his Department, nor for any year over 30 years' service.

Debts

But the advantages of the monthly surplus and the Provident Fund at the end of the service, by retirement or death, are likely to be more than set off by the heavy debts in which these labourers are involved for one reason or another. About

59 per cent. of the labourers are indebted to the Shahukar and in some cases to the Co-operative Credit Society also, to the extent of Rs. 101 to Rs. 500, while about 28 per cent. owe even larger debts, the maximum debt being about Rs. 1,400.

Only about 8 per cent. have less than Rs. 100 as debt, but about 5 per cent. of them are free from any debt at all. The rate of interest, which in some cases rises upto 25 per cent. per annum, consumes the entire surplus income of the labourers.

CHAPTER VII

OTHER LABOURERS ON SHORE

Title and Scope of the Chapter

In the previous chapter, we considered the labourers working on water at different places. The chapter on Shore labourers dealt with only labourers under the Hammalage Department ; and so it now remains to study in this chapter all other labourers under the Port Trust, who are working on shore either in the docks or on the piers. This chapter includes the study of labourers working (1) under the Hydraulic Establishment, (2) at Merewether and Hughes Dry Docks, (3) under the Sanitary Department, (4) under the Electrical Department, and (5) at Pir Pau Oil Pier.

Hydraulic Establishment

It has always been a matter of great care on the part of the Trustees of the Port to provide the most up-to-date equipment at the docks. The dock quays are provided with 207 hydraulically operated cranes, while about 91 hydraulic hoists operate in transit-sheds and warehouses. Hydraulic pumping stations are situated in the Prince's and Victoria Docks, and at Carnac Bunder outside the Alexandra Dock. The power available at all the three docks is about 2,600 gallons per minute, at a pressure of 750 lbs. per square inch. The labourers working at all these places are employed directly by the Hydraulic Establishment of the Port Trust.

Dry Docks

The services rendered by the Hughes and Merewether Dry Docks may be seen from the following table, giving the number of vessels dry-docked since 1930-31.

Number of Vessels Dry Docked from 1930 to 1934¹

¹ HUGHES DRY DOCK			² MEREWETHER DRY DOCK	
Year	No. of Ships Dry-docked	Total tons	No. of Ships Dry-docked	Total tons
1930-31	.. 63	302,461	91	213,733
1931-32	.. 50	278,543	87	229,179
1932-33	.. 52	307,598	82	189,390
1933-34	.. 57	379,309	92	185,159

By-laws for the safe and convenient use of the Merewether and Hughes dry docks provide for the manner in which dry docks shall be used, and for necessary precautions to be followed. Licenses are issued to some persons only, for cleaning, painting, and repairing vessels in the dry docks, and no unlicensed person is allowed to undertake work in connection with vessels in the dry docks. The labourers working under the various license holders do not fall within the scope of our study; and hence only those labourers who work at the Engine Houses, and under the Departmental Dry Docking are included in the chapter. The former department looks after pumping water from and into the dry docks, while the latter attends to the work of shoring vessels in the dry docks. Great skill is required while shoring a vessel to prevent it from getting out of shape.

Sanitary Department

The Sanitary condition of the docks depend on the efficient services of the sweepers and bhangies of the Sanitary Department.

Electrical Department

The Electrical Department of the Port Trust is responsible for providing proper lighting arrangement in the docks, and on the Bombay Port Trust Railway lines, right from Ballard Pier up to Wadala Junction, and all along Oil Pipe Lines, from Pir Pau Oil Pier to Wadala Junction.

¹ These figures were supplied by the department in charge.

Pir Pau Oil Pier

Besides, a few labourers working at Pir Pau Oil Pier are also included in this chapter.

Total Number of Labourers and Schedules

The Hydraulic Establishments of the three wet-docks give employment to about 575 labourers, while more than 100 labourers are busy at the two dry docks, and about 200 labourers look after lighting arrangements. No less than 275 sweepers, bhangies, etc., are employed to keep clean the docks and chawls belonging to the Port Trust. Only about 30 labourers are attached to the Pir Pau Oil Pier, some of whom are provided with free quarters at the pumping house at the Pier. The approximate total number of labourers under consideration in this chapter comes to about 1,200.

On account of the great variety of labourers in this group we obtained altogether 150 schedules, from the various departments. The following table gives the important types of labourers and the number of schedules filled in from each type :—

I		2	
Type of Labourers		Number of Schedules	
1.	Engine Drivers .. ..	..	6
2.	Firemen .. ..	..	10
3.	Greasers .. ..	..	4
4.	Carpenters .. ..	..	9
5.	Fitters .. ..	..	9
6.	Crane Drivers .. ..	..	20
7.	Hoistmen .. ..	..	10
8.	Electricians, etc. .. ..	..	18
9.	Chainboys .. ..	..	5
10.	Muccadums & Coolies .. ..	..	39
11.	Sweepers & Bhangies .. ..	..	20
Total .. ..		..	<u>150</u>

Age

As in other groups, here too a large majority (79 per cent.) of the total labourers are between 26 to 45, the maximum percentage (29 per cent.) being of these between 31 to 35. Nearly 31 per cent. of the total are between 41 to 55 which indicates that nearly one-third of them are old and experienced. Again only 8 per cent. of the total are below 26, which fact also indicates that the labourers in this group as a whole are more experienced.

Community or Caste of Labourers

Out of the total labourers 59 per cent. are Hindus, 30 per cent. Muslims, and 11 per cent. Christians. Most of the Christians work as Carpenters and Fitters, while the Muslims are employed chiefly as Drivers, Firemen, Greasers, Crane drivers, and Khalasees. Hindus are found working in all capacities in the group.

Birthplace

The most important district, from which 52 per cent. of the total labourers come, is Ratnagiri. Bombay and its Suburbs provide about 10 per cent. of the labourers, while an equal number belong to Satara and Goa. Many of the Christians belong either to Bombay and its Suburbs, or to Goa. Most of the sweepers and bhangies come from Bhawnagar State in Kathiawar and from Delhi. Besides Bombay, the only other province which supplies a considerable number of labourers (11 per cent.) is the United Provinces.

Original Occupation

About 44 per cent. of the total labourers possess some agricultural plots of land in their villages, but there are about 29 per cent. of them who have at present no interest in land, though it seems they had it in the past. In course of time, these labourers ceased to have any interest in land due to one reason or another, but still they possess some immoveable properties in their villages like a small house or a hut. Under the circumstances it would not be incorrect

to say that nearly 73 per cent. of the total labourers are agriculturists.

Out of the remaining labourers, nearly 9 per cent. of the total worked as weavers or sweepers in their village before they left it. Many of these are employed in the Sanitary Department. As for the rest, it is difficult to say anything about their original occupation with certainty.

Nature of Work

The general remarks under this heading in the previous chapter about Labourers on Water apply to these labourers also.

Driver, Fireman and Greaser

The nature of work of these labourers is not different from that described in the previous chapter, except that these labourers work on shore.

Dry Docking

The work of Carpenters, Khalasees, Coolies, and other labourers working at the dry docks, requires a good deal of efficiency and experience. After ascertaining the upright position of the vessel, she is pulled into the dry docks by means of the ship's windlass or the dock-side capstans. Check ropes are passed on board at each side of the bow and the stern, to prevent her from touching the docks on either sides. She is then hauled into position, and the entrance to the dry docks is in the meanwhile closed by a caisson, which is strong enough to resist the side pressure of over 2,000 tons. As the water is slowly pumped out, the breast shores are set and hammed on either side. The ship then rests entirely on iron blocks provided for the purpose at the bottom of the dry docks; and as soon as water is pumped out of the dry docks, bilge shores are fixed under each side of the bottom of the vessel for further support.

The work of these labourers is by no means regular. They are employed only when the ship has got to be docked or undocked, and do any other work in spare time. But they

have got to attend to their work whenever required, either during the usual working hours of the docks or outside. The ship cannot afford to waste even a minute, since the dry dock charges per day are very heavy. The charges vary from Rs. 600 to Rs. 2,000 and upwards per day, according to the registered tonnage of the vessel.

Crane Driver, and Hoistman

Seated in his little cabin on the crane, the Crane Driver moves forward and backward the governor of the crane, and up or down, right or left, goes the cargo in the sling of the crane. Alert on his duty, the Crane Driver strictly works according to the instructions of the Foreman on board the vessel; otherwise, even the slightest mistake on his part will result in a serious accident. It is on his judgment that the lives of so many labourers depend, such as the Hatchmen, the Foreman, and the Shore labourers working below on the wharf. Years of experience has turned all this into routine work, and the Crane Driver takes it all with a cool head, avoiding many chances of accidents by his instinctive judgment.

Hoists are fitted inside transit sheds and warehouses, for carrying the cargo from one floor to the other. Slowly and quietly the Hoistman goes up and down, taking up or down the cargo as required. After a little experience, he gets accustomed to his work, which requires little skill and less manual labour.

Fitter and Chainboy

Each evening, as new vessels are berthed in the docks, the quayside cranes of the Port Trust are shifted from one place to the other and adjusted properly. It is the Fitter's duty to see that all the hydraulic connections of the cranes and hoists are in perfect order, and the cranes and hoists work smoothly. The mechanical nature of the work requires training and apprenticeship.

The Chainboys, on the other hand, are young lads carrying

chains of cranes from one place to the other, and are no better than other coolies. The change of name from a coolie to a Chainboy does not really add anything to his status.

Electrician, Wireman and Lineman

The Electricians, Wiremen, and Linemen are kept busy repairing some fitting here, changing some wires there, or adjusting a new point at a third place. The work is extended over the vast area of the three docks, and other Port Trust properties, as well as Bombay Port Trust Railway Lines. The Wireman, and the Lineman handle only ordinary work, leaving the more complicated work for the Electricians.

Muccadums and Coolies

There is a classification of these coolies, and they are known as Nawaganies, Bamboo-coolies, or coolies. The two former types of labourers are more efficient and intelligent than the third one. Consequently their wages are also higher. Some of them receive Rs. 1-8-0 per day. The Muccadum, who is their head, has to supervise and control the work of his subordinates and instruct them properly. He is also responsible for their work.

Sweepers and Bhangies

In addition to the normal work which a sweeper and a bhangie is supposed to do, the labourers of the Sanitary Department have also to wash the bottom of the dry docks after the water is pumped out. A large number of sweepers can be seen washing the bottom of the dry docks, with the aid of a few Bhisties, soon after the water is pumped out.

Working Hours

The regular working hours of the docks apply to all these labourers. Excepting the Hoistmen, night work is common amongst these labourers. A Hoistman, however, rarely gets night-work. But the working hours of the labourers engaged at the dry docks are not quite regular. They change from time to time according to the docking or undocking hours of the vessel. As the work cannot be delayed even for a

short time, they have to attend to the work whenever called upon.

Wages

The wages of some of the labourers are settled on a monthly basis and of others on daily basis. However, all of them are paid at the end of the month. The following table gives the monthly wages of each of the various types of labourers, with the maximum and minimum wages received by each type. The monthly wages of those who are employed on daily basis have been arrived at by taking 26 working days in a month.

Maximum and Minimum Monthly Wages of Labourers

1 Types of Labourers	2 Maximum Wages Rs.	3 Minimum Wages Rs.
1. Engine Drivers ..	133	85
2. Electricians ..	113	84
3. Carpenters ..	104	55
4. Fitters ..	87	42
5. Wiremen ..	78	32
6. Firemen ..	68	34
7. Linemen ..	65	32
8. Muccadums & Coolies.	58	24
9. Sweepers, Bhangies, and Muccadums	52	25
10. Crane Drivers ..	44	37
11. Greasers ..	43	39
12. Chainboys ..	24	24

Nearly 32 per cent. of the total labourers are skilled, chiefly Engine Drivers, Carpenters, Fitters, Electricians, Serangs and Muccadums. Some of the Firemen, Greasers, Crane Drivers, Wiremen and Linemen, who are on a higher scale of wages, are also skilled labourers. The remaining 68 per cent. who are unskilled labourers are employed as manual labourers; but the nearer their wages reach the upper limit of Rs. 40 a month, the more skill and experience their work demands.

Nearly 47 per cent. of the total labourers receive Rs. 31 to Rs. 40 while 21 per cent. earn less ; but none get less than Rs. 21 a month. Among the skilled labourers some of the Engine Drivers, Carpenters, and Fitters receive even more than Rs. 100.

Compulsory Leave to Crane Drivers

Crane Drivers are employed on monthly wages, but there is not sufficient work in the docks to keep all of them busy from day to day. The Port Trust is also not in a position to dismiss some of the Crane Drivers and keep the rest busy from day to day. Whenever there is a rush of work the demand for Crane Drivers increases, and additional labourers are required to meet with such an extra demand, which cannot be met with by engaging novices. The Port Trust, consequently, has to maintain the necessary number of Crane Drivers to obviate the difficulty of irregular demand ; but a certain number of them are asked to take compulsory leave in turn. No wages are paid for these compulsory holidays, but the loss due to this compulsory leave is more than made up by overtime and night work.

The Port Trust is also not free from the defect of following the usual practice of giving night work to those labourers who have worked throughout the day, in spite of the fact that a certain number of labourers are asked to take compulsory leave. One fails to understand, why some of these labourers, who have enjoyed compulsory leave during the day, should not be given a chance of doing some work at night.

Monthly Expenditure

The difference in the standard of living noted in the previous chapter, between that of the skilled and unskilled labourers, is also applicable here. The comfortable home of Engine Drivers, Carpenters, Fitters, and Electricians and a few other well paid labourers resembles more that of lower middle class people than labourers. The skilled labourers prefer a quiet, peaceful home, and do not grudge spending

a little more on their household requirements. Some of the Christian workers who work as Carpenters and Fitters, live in the suburbs, where they have small houses of their own.

The life of unskilled labourers in this group greatly resembles that of unskilled labourers in the previous group, and therefore we shall only note the differences wherever they exist.

Number of Dependents

Nearly 83 per cent. of the total labourers have two to six dependents, the maximum percentage (21 per cent.) being of those having three dependents. Out of the remaining labourers only 8 per cent. of the total have more than six dependents. The large number of dependents in some cases is due to the increasing number of children. About 5 per cent. of the total have one dependent, while an equal number have no dependents at all.

About 40 per cent. of the total labourers stay with all the members of their families in Bombay, while about 20 per cent. have only some members of their families in Bombay. But the remaining 40 per cent. of the total labourers stay alone.

Rent

Out of the 40 per cent. of the total labourers who stay alone in Bombay, many are boarders with their friends or relatives, who have their families in Bombay, paying about Rs. 10 per month. However, some of them rent a room in common with others and each of them pay about a rupee or two by way of rent. The remaining 60 per cent. who have got their families in Bombay, have to pay higher rents for rooms. In some cases the rent is as high as sixteen to twenty rupees a month.

Some of the Christian workers, who have their houses in the suburbs, stay there with their families, but have also to rent a small room in Bombay. They have their railway season tickets, and go to the suburbs every evening ; yet due to extra

work or night work, they are often unable to go home after work. So they require some place in Bombay, where they can put up for the night. For this purpose they do not rent a separate room, but share a room with some of their friends in Bombay and pay a few rupees for the same.

The Port Trust has provided small chawls on the Ferry Wharf outside the Alexandra Dock, for Crane Drivers. But the provision is inadequate, and the chawls seem old enough to require reconstruction. A new big chawl on the site of the old ones will not only give adequate provision to the Crane Drivers, but will also meet with the long standing need of labourers working at the Dry Docks. All these labourers cannot afford to stay away from the docks, as the nature of their work is such that they may be called upon to work any time, and have to leave the docks late ; consequently they have to rent rooms near the docks at high price. The new chawls will serve the double purpose of giving adequate facilities to all the labourers concerned, and at the same time save a part of the income of the labourers.

Food

As these labourers work on the shore, they have no difficulty in arranging for their tea and meals during working hours. Naturally they have not to spend money at two places, like the labourers in the previous group, and so their food also costs less. As noticed before, the boarding charges for a Hindu labourer are about rupees ten per head : it all depends on what sort of facilities these labourers require. But the expenses of those who stay with a family in Bombay are higher. They have to spend Rs. 15 to Rs. 25 or even more every month on food. The expenses vary with the size of the family, the standard of living, and the community to which they belong. Some of the skilled labourers spend as much as Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 a month. The Muslims and Christians on the whole spend more than Hindu labourers in similar circumstances.

Clothing

There is some difference in the dress of labourers according to the community to which they belong. Unskilled Hindu labourers prefer Dhooties, while Muslims and Christians put on trousers. The same is the case with skilled Hindu labourers. Consequently their expenditure on dress is somewhat larger. The average monthly expenditure of an unskilled labourer comes to two or three rupees a month, whereas that of skilled ones is as high as ten rupees a month.

Luxuries

The usual expenditure on this item is from two to five rupees, and in some cases it approaches the figure of ten rupees a month. Christian workers spend quite a lot on drink, while Bhangies are so much addicted to tea that they spend about six to eight annas a day on tea and bread. As a matter of fact, tea is used by them more as food.

Total Monthly Expenditure

The total monthly expenditure of the labourers in the group vary from Rs. 11 to Rs. 105. The average unskilled labourer spends sixteen to thirty rupees ; while those spending more are either skilled labourers, or those of the unskilled ones, who have large families to maintain in Bombay. Nearly 37 per cent. of the total labourers spend less than Rs. 30 per month, while about 33 per cent. spend Rs. 31 to Rs. 45. The expenses of the rest are still higher. The percentage of labourers whose expenses are between Rs. 46 to Rs. 60 is 18, but as we proceed further the percentage gradually decreases till at last there is a slight break just before the final limit of Rs. 105 is reached.

Monthly Surplus and Deficit

These labourers, like those in the previous group, are not lucky enough to have a surplus monthly budget. Nearly 65 per cent. do have a surplus at the end of the month, but about 34 per cent. have a deficit, while only 1 per cent. can balance their income and expenditure. The surplus is

not as substantial as in the previous group. Nearly 57 per cent. save less than Rs. 21 a month, while only 8 per cent. can save a bit more, the highest savings being between Rs. 66 to Rs. 70. Out of those having a deficit, nearly 31 per cent. of the total suffer a loss up to Rs. 10 but the deficit of the remaining 3 per cent. of the total is more than that amount.

The savings are utilised in sending remittances to the family either every month regularly in small instalments, or once in two or three months. But the major portion of the savings is taken by the Marwaries, whose monetary obligations on these labourers are so heavy that they are not in a position to free themselves from their clutches.

Provident Fund

All these labourers are classed as temporary servants entitled to the benefits of Provident Fund. About 17 per cent. of the total labourers have no Provident Fund at all. The Provident Fund of about 9 per cent. of the total labourers is less than Rs. 101 each and that of about 31 per cent. is between Rs. 101 to Rs. 500. However, 27 per cent. of the labourers have to their credit Rs. 501 to Rs. 1,000 and the remaining 16 per cent. have still more.

Debts

The heavy debts which these labourers owe to moneylenders and others are incurred for social and agricultural reasons. Excepting about 7 per cent. who are absolutely free from debt, all others are involved in debt. About 15 per cent. of the total labourers owe less than Rs. 101 to the moneylenders, but about 40 per cent. are indebted to the extent of Rs. 500. Out of the remaining labourers nearly 25 per cent. of the total have debts between Rs. 501 to Rs. 1,000 and about 13 per cent. have still heavier burdens, which in some cases amounts even to Rs. 5,000.

CHAPTER VIII

LABOURERS IN THE MECHANICAL WORKSHOP

Attached to the docks is the Port Trust Mechanical Workshop situated at Wadi Bunder, to the east of Fuel Oil Installations. The Workshop undertakes repairing work of the dock gears and other properties of the Port Trust. It does not undertake the repair to properties of other bodies, such as steamship companies, etc., who are required to make their own arrangements elsewhere.

Long iron sheds in the centre of a spacious compound form the premises of the workshop, where provision has been made to effect all sorts of small or big repairs. More than 800 labourers, both mechanics and other skilled or unskilled labourers, are busy all day long in the workshop itself, or outside in the docks or elsewhere, when required. The variety in the nature of work of different classes of labourers, as well as their large number compel us to make a separate study of the labourers working at the workshop. No less than seventeen important types of labourers,—both skilled and unskilled, work side by side in the workshop. Though apparently there may not appear any relation between the work of these labourers, except that they work at the same place, yet if one visualises the variety of workmen required for any kind of repair in the docks, the doubt will be soon removed. Take the case of a steam launch, to be overhauled and repaired. Fitters, Turners, Carpenters, Boilermakers, Rivetters, Holders, Blacksmiths, Hammermen, Coppersmiths, Tinsmiths, Painters, Coolies, etc., may all have to contribute their share in repairing it.

Total Number of Labourers and Schedules

More than eight hundred labourers attend the workshop daily. We have obtained 150 schedules from them. The high percentage of 18.7 is necessary in view of the different types

of labourers employed. The following table shows the different types of labourers, and the number of schedules filled in from each type :—

Number of Schedules Filled In				
Types of Labourers				Number of Schedules
1.	Fitters	..	..	17
2.	Turners	..	..	10
3.	Carpenters	..	..	17
4.	Drivers	..	..	8
5.	Firemen	..	..	9
6.	Boilermakers	..	..	13
7.	Riveters	..	..	7
8.	Holders	..	..	3
9.	Blacksmiths	..	..	5
10.	Hammermen	..	..	5
11.	Coppersmiths	..	..	4
12.	Tinsmiths	..	..	4
13.	Moulders	..	..	4
14.	Painters	..	..	3
15.	Sailmakers	..	..	3
16.	Bhisties	..	..	3
17.	Muccadums & Coolies	..	..	35
Total				150

Age

Nearly 81 per cent. of the total labourers are between the age of 26 to 45. The maximum percentage is of those between 31 to 35. Only about 8 per cent. of the total are below 26, and 11 per cent. above 45. The group seems to possess normal characteristics common to other groups.

Community or Caste of Labourers

Out of the total labourers about 63 per cent. are Hindus, and 18 per cent. Muslims. The percentage of Christian workers in this group is about 14. Besides these, about 2

per cent. are Jews, 2 per cent. Chinamen, a few Parsees and Anglo-Indians. The Hindu, Muslim and Christian workers are found working in different capacities. A large number of Christian workers work as Turners and Carpenters, while none of them is employed as a coolie. Thus the community as a whole attends to intelligent work ; and their wages are consequently higher. The Jews work as Turners and Fitters ; while the Chinamen, who are expert in the art of building wooden boats, are employed as Carpenters. The few Parsees and Anglo-Indians work also as Fitters, and Turners.

Amongst the Hindus nearly 37 per cent. of the total are Marathas working mostly as coolies. They form the bulk of unskilled labourers. The rest are found working in different capacities, both as skilled and unskilled labourers. Panchal labourers work as coppersmiths, and Lohars as blacksmiths.

Birthplace

Nearly 51 per cent. of the total labourers are from Ratnagiri (29 per cent.) and Satara (21 per cent.) districts. They are chiefly Marathas, Mahars and Muslims. About 15 per cent. of them belong to Bombay City and the suburbs, whereas 8 per cent. belong to Goa. The Christian labourers come from these places. About 8 per cent. of the total labourers, especially Lohars and Panchals belong to Gujarat and the Baroda State. About 5 per cent. of the total labourers belong to Colaba district and 4 per cent. to Poona. Excepting the Chinese labourers, all others come from various parts of India. A few labourers (3 per cent.) belong to Diu and Daman, the Portuguese possessions in India.

Original Occupation

There are about 53 per cent. of the total labourers, who have neither a house nor a plot of land in their village. But about 33 per cent. of the labourers, who are agriculturists, possess small houses in their village, as well as some plots of land of their own, while about 14 per cent. have only small houses. It seems that these 14 per cent. of the labourers had

some interest in agricultural land in the past, but now they have lost it. As to the 53 per cent. of the total labourers, who have neither any house nor any plot of land for agriculture, it is possible that many of them, who are above the rank of coolies, may be following the same or similar occupations, in their villages, which they follow in Bombay.

Nature of Work

A large number of these labourers are mechanics and artisans. Naturally, therefore, they must be intelligent and skillful labourers. Some of them follow their ancestral occupations, and claim to possess some hereditary qualities for their work.

Fitter, Turner and Carpenter

All these are skilled labourers. The first two types of labourers are mechanics, and without their aid no machinery out of order can be made to work. The Carpenters working in the Mechanical Workshop are of a much higher grade than the ordinary Carpenters working in building industries. Some of them are Pattern makers, some Boatbuilders, and others undertake all sorts of new or repairing work, such as repairing Steamlaunches, Tugs, Barges, etc.

Driver and Fireman

In the previous chapter we have already described the work of a Driver and a Fireman.

Boilermaker, Rivetter, Holder and Hammerman

The broken parts of machinery and other iron fittings of the dock gear are replaced by new parts or repaired by the Boilermaker. The Rivetters have to rivet iron plates and other iron and metal parts. The duty of the Holders is to hold properly the chisel when the Hammerman is busy striking with a hammer. The Boilermakers are skilled labourers but the Holders and Hammermen are manual labourers. The work of the Rivetters is partly manual and partly intelligent.

Blacksmith, Coppersmith, Tinsmith and Moulder

The first three undertake the repairing work of iron, brass and tin fittings. They also prepare new parts to replace the broken ones. The Moulders have to heat and melt the metal and pour it into castings to prepare new parts.

Painter, Sailmaker and Bhisti

A Painter has to paint wooden and other fittings, while a Sailmaker has to repair the sails of ships, and other canvas articles. Bhisties are necessary to supply water wherever required, in the workshop or outside. The first type of labourers are skilled ones, while the latter two are unskilled.

Muccadums and Coolies

The Muccadum is the supervisor and head of the Coolies, who are all manual labourers in the workshop.

Working Hours

The usual working hours are from 8 a.m. to 5-30 p.m. with an hour's recess at 12-30 in the afternoon. On Saturdays, however, the workshop is open upto 1-30 p.m. The total number of working hours per week comes to about 48. For any over time work, done before or after the usual working hours, the labourers receive extra payments.

Though night work is not a normal feature of the workshop, whenever there is pressure of work, the workshop remains open continuously even for a fortnight. On the whole night work is carried on for about two months in a year. The working hours for nightshifts are from 7-30 p.m. to 3 a.m., and work up to 12 midnight is reckoned as half the period of the nightshift.

Wages

All the labourers are employed by the workshop on daily wages but are paid only at the end of the month. Nearly 61 per cent. of the total labourers are skilled, while the remaining 39 per cent. are unskilled.

The labourers are able to get work from day to day. About a day or two which they may lose by way of leave, is soon

made up by extra work done during the course of the month. The monthly wages are accordingly calculated upon the basis of 26 working days in a month.

The following table shows the maximum and minimum monthly wages of each type of labourers, in the group :—

Maximum and Minimum Monthly Wages of Labourers

1 Types of Labourers	2 Maximum Wages Rs.	3 Minimum Wages Rs.
1. Carpenters ..	136	52
2. Turners ..	124	72
3. Fitters ..	114	39
4. Blacksmiths	104	72
5. Boilermakers	98	48
6. Coppersmiths	95	65
7. Drivers ..	92	72
8. Moulders ..	78	59
9. Muccadums	72	52
10. Sailmakers ..	62	56
11. Tinsmiths ..	55	39
12. Painters ..	45	—
13. Firemen ..	45	26
14. Rivetters ..	42	31
15. Hammermen	39	35
16. Bhisties ..	35	—
17. Holders ..	32	26
18. Coolies ..	32	23

Nearly 61 per cent. of the total labourers are skilled. 17 per cent. of the total earn Rs. 41 to Rs. 61 a month, while about 21 per cent. earn Rs. 61 to Rs. 75, and about 14 per cent. Rs. 76 to Rs. 100. But the monthly income of about 9 per cent. of the total is Rs. 101 to Rs. 140 ; this is the only group, having such a large number of labourers earning more than Rs. 100 a month. Most of these highly paid labourers are Carpenters, Turners, Fitters and Blacksmiths, as can be

seen from the above table.

The unskilled labourers, forming 39 per cent. of the total, are Coolies, Holders, Bhistics, Hammermen, and others. Nearly 17 per cent. of the total, which is the maximum percentage in the whole group, earn Rs. 26 to Rs. 30, while about 8 per cent. can get Rs. 21 to Rs. 25 and 15 per cent. Rs. 31 to Rs. 40. The monthly income of the labourers, who receive the lowest wages, is Rs. 23 a month, which is much higher than that of labourers in any other group.

Monthly Expenditure

The vast majority (61 per cent.) of the total labourers, who are skilled labourers, with higher incomes, lead a decent and comfortable life. Their standard of living is far superior to that of the ordinary manual labourers; and on the whole their expenses are also higher than labourers in other groups.

Dependents

Only 4 per cent. of the total labourers have no dependents at all. All other labourers have dependents, the majority (61 per cent.) having three to five dependents. The maximum percentage (24 per cent.) is of those having four dependents. About 14 per cent. have one to two dependents while about 15 per cent. have six to seven dependents, and only 6 per cent. have eight to nine dependents.

Many skilled labourers prefer staying with a family in Bombay, for they need a comfortable homely life. As many as 40 per cent. of the total labourers are staying with their entire families in Bombay, while about 25 per cent. stay with at least some members of their families in Bombay. Only about 31 per cent. are alone in Bombay, leaving their families at their native village. Out of these 31 per cent. who stay in Bombay, many are unskilled manual labourers, and the reason why they stay alone is that their income hardly permits them to maintain a family in this city. At times when a little saving has been made, they invite their families to Bombay.

Rent

No chawls are provided by the Port Trust for these labourers, so all of them have to rent rooms in the city. A few unskilled labourers, however, are accommodated at the Bombay Port Trust, Wari Bunder Chawls. Some of the Christian workers have their own small houses in the suburbs, and so they have to spend nothing by way of rent. But many of the skilled labourers, who stay with their families in Bombay, have to rent rooms, in good localities, and pay rent upto twenty to twenty-five rupees. Even the unskilled labourers who stay with their families in Bombay have to pay rent upto ten rupees a month. Many of those who are alone in Bombay stay as boarders with some of their friends or relatives. Some of them rent a room in common for half a dozen people and share the rent equally, while some do not rent any room at all, but sleep outside the rooms where they put up as boarders. The Christian workers have something like a club system. Under that system many persons following different vocations in life dine and stay together, and share the expenses.

As to the suggestion, whether it is possible to build chawls for these labourers, we think that so far as unskilled labourers are concerned it would certainly be a great advantage to them if they are provided with cheap, clean and healthy chawls near the workshop. But as for the skilled labourers, who spend a substantial portion of their income—say nearly one-fifth—on rent, the idea of providing them with chawls is not feasible, and the reason is not far to seek. Many of these labourers belong to different communities and come from different places. They have their own traditions and mode of living, and are in a position to keep up the same. Consequently they prefer staying amongst their own people—either coming from the same place or belonging to the same caste or community. This tendency amongst them is so strong that they would not like to leave the localities and the com-

pany to which they are accustomed to, and go to stay at some out of the way corner of the city, where the Port Trust may select to build chawls.

Food

As the standard of living of these labourers is higher, naturally they must spend more on their food, clothing, and even luxuries. An average skilled labourer, with his family in Bombay, spends somewhere between thirty to sixty rupees a month on food and other household items. The expenses in individual cases depend upon the number of dependents, the mode of their living, their habits, and also the caste or community to which they belong. The Muslim and the Christian workers spend more than the Hindus. In some exceptional cases the expenses even reach the figure of sixty rupees a month.

The unskilled labourers, however, spend like others under similar conditions in different groups. When staying with a family they spend between Rs. 15 to Rs. 25 on food, but when alone they live economically. As usual, the Hindu unskilled labourers when alone, stay as boarders with some families, paying about ten rupees, or even less, as boarding charges. The Muslims have their meals at some restaurants, while the Christians have it at their clubs.

In the afternoon, however, all these labourers have their meals at the restaurants near the workshop.

Clothing

The expenses on clothing of some of the skilled labourers are as high as ten to twelve rupees a month ; but ordinarily they come to six to eight rupees a month. The skilled labourers look smart in their cotton suits, but the unskilled labourers can hardly afford to spend more than a couple of rupees on their clothes.

Luxuries

The pocket expenses of skilled labourers vary between five to ten rupees a month ; but the unskilled labourers have to

content themselves with less. The Christian labourers were found to spend much more, compared to other labourers, on tobacco and drink.

Total Monthly Expenditure

The monthly expenses of labourers in this group are on the whole higher than those in other groups. The minimum expenses are Rs. 16 to Rs. 20, and about 15 per cent. of the total belong to this class. The minimum expenses in the group are equal to those amongst Stevedore labourers, but higher than those amongst labourers of other groups. The minimum monthly income also is higher than that in other groups, and so the labourers in this group are in a position to bear higher expenses.

Amongst the skilled labourers the maximum percentage (15 per cent.) is of those spending Rs. 46 to Rs. 50. Out of the remaining labourers, about 27 per cent. of the total spend Rs. 26 to Rs. 45. But the expenses of the rest are much higher. About 33 per cent. of the total spend between Rs. 51 to Rs. 75 and 9 per cent. spend Rs. 76 to Rs. 100. Only about 1 per cent. of the total can afford to spend more than Rs. 100.

Monthly Surplus and Deficit

The higher expenses, however, are not without any corresponding effect on the monthly surplus. The surplus is lower than one would expect of these skilled labourers whose income is more than Rs. 40 a month. Out of the total labourers, about 69 per cent. of the total have a surplus varying between one to seventy rupees. The surplus of 50 per cent. of the total labourers is below Rs. 15. The maximum percentage (23 per cent.) is of those whose monthly surplus is Rs. 6 to Rs. 10. Out of the remaining labourers having a surplus, about 15 per cent. of the total can save Rs. 16 to Rs. 35. Only about 4 per cent. of the total labourers have still higher savings.

But about 6 per cent. of the labourers have neither any surplus nor any deficit each month. The remaining 25 per

cent. of the total labourers have deficit which in all cases is below Rs. 20. It is due to heavy expenses of maintaining a family in Bombay. The deficit is generally made up by sending the family to the village.

Provident Fund

Except about 21 per cent. of the total labourers, all others save something by way of Provident Fund to draw upon on retirement from service. The Provident Fund of only 10 per cent. of the total is below Rs. 100 but that of 24 per cent. is between Rs. 101 to Rs. 500, and that of 13 per cent. between Rs. 501 to Rs. 1,000. Other labourers have still higher Provident Funds, varying from Rs. 1,001 to Rs. 4,000.

Life Insurance

One noticeable feature of this group is that some of the skilled labourers have insured their lives to the extent of Rs. 2,000 each, and pay their premiums regularly. This shows the great progress amongst skilled labourers who have begun to realise the importance of a progressive saving at the end of their career.

Debts

The debts of these labourers are comparatively slight. Nearly 21 per cent. of the labourers have no debts at all, while about 8 per cent. owe less than Rs. 101. The debts of 47 per cent. of the total labourers are between Rs. 101 to Rs. 500 and that of 19 per cent. between Rs. 501 to Rs. 1,000. Only about 5 per cent. owe between Rs. 1,001 to Rs. 3,000. The percentage of those having debts over rupees one thousand is much lower than that amongst Labourers on Shore ; and nearly equals that amongst Coal labourers.

On the whole, this group, which consists of mainly skilled labourers, is happier than any other group. Their income is higher, and so are their expenses, and consequently the surplus is not high enough. But the most important factor which contributes to their happiness is that nearly 65 per cent. of the total labourers stay with at least some members

of their family in Bombay. In spite of this, their debts are comparatively not heavier than those in the other groups. This is the only group in which so many skilled labourers are able to stay with their families in Bombay, leading a happy and comfortable life.

CHAPTER IX

LABOURERS ON THE BOMBAY PORT TRUST RAILWAY

While the actual length of the Railway from the North to the South is about 7 miles only, the total trackage is about 118 miles. This comparatively large mileage of sidings and connecting lines serves the extensive storage areas belonging to the Port Trust.

The Bombay Port Trust Railway at Wadala Junction joins both the B.B. & C.I. and the G.I.P. Railways, and wagons are also interchanged here. The B.P.T. Railway deals mainly in goods traffic. At Ballard Pier Railway Station, the G.I.P. and the B.B. & C.I. Railway passenger trains meet the mail steamers. The booking of passengers and their luggage is done by the Railway concerned, but the B.P.T. Railway has to supervise and see that the said Railway trains work without any accident or delay within their jurisdiction.

The G.I.P. and B.B. & C.I. Railways run their goods trains up to Wadala Junction, and from thence the B.P.T. Railway engines are utilised to sort them on the Hump Yard (on a slope) and wagons are sent to the respective nine stations on the B.P.T. Railway lines. The activities on the B.P.T. Railway are shown by the following tables giving the daily average number of wagons loaded and unloaded, and the total number of wagons loaded and unloaded at each of the nine Railway Stations, during the year 1933-34:--

TABLE I
DAILY AVERAGE NUMBER OF WAGONS LOADED
AND UNLOADED¹

		Loaded	Unloaded
Local	..	66	65
Foreign	..	144	149
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	..	210	214
		<hr/>	<hr/>

TABLE II
WAGONS LOADED OR UNLOADED AT EACH STATION

1	2		3	
NAME OF STATIONS	NUMBER OF WAGONS		NUMBER OF WAGONS	
	LOCAL		FOREIGN	
	LOADED	UNLOADED	LOADED	UNLOADED
Alexandra Dock	.. 2638	15097	8900	1531
Victoria Dock	.. 581	2572	6308	98
Liquid Fuel Depot	.. 1302	182	6199	886
Pathar Bunder	.. 42	14	2350	531
Cotton Depot	.. 5	4	1412	19435
Grain Depot	.. 14754	4239	4500	22125
Manganese Depot	.. 3215	430	907	2338
Coal Depot	.. 119	59	61	4535
Stores Depot	.. 841	137	893	124
Oil Depot	.. 449	127	19372	2668
Wadala	.. 58	1004	1136	262
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	.. 24002	23865	52738	54533
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

The railway transport of cotton and grain from the depots to the docks is handicapped by the competition of motor

¹ The figures in this and the next table were supplied by the department concerned.

lorries. The competition is inevitable whenever there is a question of short distance traffic ; and the facilities of quick and ready service afforded by the lorries are bound to succeed.

Labourers working under three Departments

The work of labourers working on the B.P.T. Railway, is controlled by three departments *viz.*, the Loco-shed at Wadala, the Senior Assistant Engineer's Department, and the Railway Manager's Department.

The Loco-shed at Wadala provides the locomotives on the lines, and also carries on the necessary repairs. Out of the total of 26 locomotives, about 12 locomotives run up and down the lines daily. About 106 labourers of all grades work at the Loco-shed. About 42 Engine Drivers and Firemen working on the locomotives, though technically under the Railway Manager's Department are included in this group as they have evidently to work with them.

The Senior Assistant Engineer's Department (which will be referred to as Railway Engineer's Department hereafter) has to keep the railway lines in proper working order, and has also to look after the signals and interlocking on the lines. The labourers working under the Permanent Way Inspector and the Signal and Interlocking Inspector, number about 494.

The labourers under the Railway Manager have to sort out the wagons, and assist the goods traffic at the various stations on the Railway. About 394 labourers, distributed over the nine stations, work under the Railway Manager, and about 50 labourers, who are also under the same officer, work at the Wagon Examining Department.

Total Number of Labourers and Schedules

The total number of labourers comes to approximately 1000, and the 150 schedules from among them represent nearly 15 per cent. of the total labourers. The following table shows the number of schedules filled in from each type of labourers in the group :—

Number of Schedules Filled In

1 Types of Labourers	2 Number of Schedules
1. Drivers	4
2. Firemen	3
3. Fitters	10
4. Carpenters	2
5. Painters	2
6. Boilermakers, Blacksmiths, etc. ..	6
7. Hammermen	3
8. Sundry Labourers	6
9. Cleaner Boys	5
10. Keymen	4
11. Muccadums	7
12. Gangmen and Coolies	53
13. Shunters	2
14. Cabinmen	4
15. Hookmen	6
16. Pointsmen	7
17. Lampmen	2
18. Gatemen	5
19. Loading Hamals	3
20. Bellmen	3
21. Trolleyman	13
Total	150

Age

Out of the total number of labourers nearly 85 per cent. are between 26 to 45, the maximum percentage being 32 per cent. of those between 31 to 35. About 12 per cent. of the total are between 16 to 25, while the cleaner boys, who clean the locomotives, are below 20. Only about 3 per cent. of the total are between 46 to 50; while there is no labourer above 50.

Community or Caste of Labourers

About 84 per cent. of the total labourers are Hindus, 11 per cent. Muslims, and 5 per cent. Christians. Some of the Christian labourers work at the Loco-shed, while the Muslim labourers are scattered over all the departments.

Amongst the Hindu labourers nearly 45 per cent. are Mahars, 20 per cent. Ahirs (Bhaiyas), and 10 per cent. Marathas. The rest belong to various castes. Most of these

labourers are strong and sturdy, and quite suitable for the manual work they are entrusted with.

Birthplace

Nearly 49 per cent. of the total labourers are from Nasik and Ratnagiri Districts, many of whom are Mahars and Marathas. About 5 per cent. belong to Bombay City and the Suburbs, and about 3 per cent. to Goa, most of the immigrants from the latter place being Christians. But nearly 34 per cent. of the total labourers belong to the United Provinces, and many of them are Ahirs or 'Bhaiyas'. This is the only other group, in which such a large number of labourers come from so remote a place like the United Provinces ; the first group is that of Stevedore labourers in which about 46 per cent. of the total hail from the same province.

Original Occupation

With the exception of about 8 per cent. of the total labourers, all others are agriculturists. Out of them about 73 per cent. of the total labourers have either their own or family plots of land and small houses, while about 19 per cent. of the total have only small houses. Though this latter class have no agricultural land or any permanent interest in land, they owned at one time or another, yet they claim themselves to be agriculturists. Some of the well-to-do Bhaiyas possess large fields and flocks of cattle.

Nature of Work

The work of the Driver, the Fireman, the Fitter, the Carpenter, the Painter, the Boilermaker, and the Hammerman has already been described in previous chapters.

Sundry Labourers and Cleaner Boys

There are a few labourers in the Loco-shed who are entrusted with sundry work in connection with the locomotives, such as cleaning the locomotives, washing them, removing ash from the boilers, lighting fire, etc. The cleaner boy has to clean the boilers, and he is the youngest of all the labourers, receiving at the most about 11 to 14 annas a day.

Muccadum, Gangman, Keyman and Coolies

The labourers employed in keeping the Railway lines in proper working order have to shift from place to place, lifting rails and changing them here and there. The Gangmen (as these labourers are called) work all day long in the sun with a shovel or a spade or a pick-axe. He has also to guard himself from the trains running on the lines. Ten Gangmen form one gang, and over each gang there is one supervising Muccadum, who acts as their immediate superior. Some of the labourers, who attend to the work of inspecting and tightening the bolts of the rails at the joints, are called Keymen.

The coolies working as manual labourers in all the departments as well as their Muccadums, are included amongst these labourers.

Shunter

The Shunter is responsible for all the staff under him, *viz.* the Hookman and the Pointsman. He is a smart active fellow, and his duty is to regulate the movements of the wagons with the aid of hand-signals. He is responsible for disconnecting wagons and guiding them to their respective sidings or sheds. He has to work with great care and attention to avoid accidents.

Cabinman

Giving and receiving 'line clear' for trains, the Cabinman operates the levers of points, locks, and signals, and sets correct lines for the arrival and departure of trains. He must be both physically strong enough to operate levers, and intelligent, for the job involves great responsibility. Even a slight mistake on his part may result in a serious accident.

Hookman

The Hookman has to connect and disconnect wagons, to pin down breaks of running wagons, and also to do the work of a Shunter whenever required. He has often to stand in between two wagons, and be careful about their movements,

lest he may be jammed between buffers, or run over by wagons or locomotives.

Pointsman

The Pointsman reverses the points of levers in order to shut a point in any direction for a moving locomotive, or a wagon. Whenever necessary, he has to serve as a Hookman.

Lampman

The Lampman is required to clean the lamps of the signals and light them in the evening and extinguish them at sun rise. He has also to watch the lights of the signals during the night, and is responsible for the same.

Gateman

The Gateman has to open or close the gates for the public or the trains as required. He is informed of the approach of a train by an electric bell in his cabin, or by the drop of the nearby signal.

Loading Hamal

The Loading Hamal has to load wagons at the stations.

Bellman

By ringing the bell at the level-crossing, and in the docks, where the public has to cross the railway lines, the Bellman warns them of the approaching train.

Trolleyman

The Trolleyman are required to push and run the railway line inspection trollies, and the nature of their work demands them to be long-winded and expert runners on the narrow tracks. They have to look out for the running trains, and the line clear signals to avoid accident or mishap to their trolley.

Working Hours

The usual working hours of the docks apply to the labourers under the Railway Engineer and some of the labourers working at the Loco-shed. The labourers under the Railway Manager, however, work by shifts. The first shift works from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., and the second from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m.

The working hours of other labourers at the Loco-shed are

irregular. They have to work for twelve hours a day, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The Driver and the Fireman on locomotives, which are kept running from 4 a.m. to 12 midnight, also put in twelve hours work, but they are allowed to rest after every four hours continuous work.

Wages

All the labourers in this group, excepting some under the Railway Manager, are employed on daily wages and payments are made as usual at the end of the month. Some of the labourers, who are employed by the Railway Manager on monthly wages also receive an allowance of two annas a day, and we have added three rupees to their monthly wages to arrive at their actual monthly income. As the labourers receive regular daily work, the following table, showing the maximum and minimum wages received by labourers, has been prepared on the basis of 26 working days in a month.

Maximum and Minimum Monthly Wages of Labourers

1 Types of Labourers	2 Maximum Wages		3 Minimum Wages	
	Rs.		Rs.	
1. Drivers	104	..	91
2. Boilermakers	98	..	39
3. Fitters	91	..	39
4. Painters	78	..	35
5. Carpenters	75	..	43
6. Muccadums	45	..	35
7. Firemen	45	..	35
8. Cabinmen	36	..	30
9. Shunters	32	..	30
10. Keymen	29	..	25
11. Loading Hamals	29	..	25
12. Hammermen	28	..	25
13. Hookmen	27	..	24
14. Trolleyman	27	..	22
15. Sundry Labourers	26	..	—
16. Gangmen & Coolies	26	..	22
17. Gatemen	25	..	22
18. Bellmen	25	..	22
19. Lampmen	24	..	23
20. Pointsmen	24	..	22
21. Cleaner Boys	23	..	18

Only about 16 per cent. of the total labourers are skilled. Amongst the skilled labourers can be included all Drivers, Carpenters, a few Boilermakers, Fitters, Painters, Muccadums and Firemen. The rest are unskilled labourers. But their work is not just manual labour. The required amount of skill and experience for each type of labourers has already been indicated while describing the nature of their work.

The monthly income of skilled labourers varies from Rs. 41 to Rs. 105. Out of them the maximum percentage (5 per cent.) is of those earning Rs. 41 to Rs. 45. About 3 per cent. of the total labourers earn Rs. 46 to Rs. 75, while about 7 per cent. Rs. 76 to Rs. 100. Only a few can make a little more than Rs. 100.

The unskilled labourers form about 84 per cent. of the total, and out of them the maximum percentage (58 per cent.) is of those earning Rs. 21 to Rs. 25. The income of only 2 per cent. of the total is less than Rs. 21 while that of about 24 per cent. is Rs. 26 to Rs. 40. As opposed to the labourers in the Mechanical Workshop, this group consists mainly of unskilled labourers ; and consequently the income, expenditure and standard of living of these labourers is much inferior to theirs.

Monthly Expenditure

The life and mode of living of unskilled labourers does not differ materially from those in other groups.

Dependents

With the exception of about 3 per cent. of the total all the rest have some dependents. Nearly 86 per cent. of the total labourers have two to six dependents, and the maximum percentage (27 per cent.) consists of those having two dependents, while about 24 per cent. have three dependents.

Nearly 23 per cent. of the total labourers stay alone in Bombay, leaving their families at their villages. But out of the remainder about 37 per cent. of the total labourers stay with their entire families in Bombay, while an equal number

stay, only with some members of their families in Bombay.

Rent

The labourers in this group, with the exception of about 8 per cent., are given free quarters by the Port Trust, either at their chawls at Wadala Junction, or at Antop Village. The labourers with families, are given separate rooms, while those staying alone have to share a room with two others. Out of those who are not given free quarters, some are Fitters and Carpenters, who possess their own houses in the Suburbs. However, some have to rent rooms in the City as usual.

Food, Clothing and Luxuries

Enough has been already said about the food, clothing and luxuries of unskilled labourers and their usual expenditure on such items ; yet, something remains to be said about the 'Bhaiyas' from the United Provinces, who form an important section of the labourers in this group.

The Bhaiyas

The familiar term 'Bhaiya' presents to anyone a picture of a stout, tall, well-built man, in 'dhoti', shirt, and a small white cap. With a big stick in his hand, and his heavy shoes, the Bhaiya could be distinguished even from a distance by his peculiar loud voice.

Early in the morning at about 5 or 5-30 the Bhaiya gets up, takes his bath and prepares his food. Bread, milk, and vegetables form his breakfast. He leaves his quarters for work at about seven or so. The Bhaiya—a born enemy of tea—would never taste tea either in the morning, afternoon, or at any time. At noon he would eat what little tiffin he might have brought with him from home. If he has not got food from home, at the most, he eats about half an anna's worth of gram, but would never eat anything else from outside till he reaches home in the evening, when he would once again prepare his meal. So simple are his habits that he does not require tobacco, betel-nuts, or drink.

With his economical, plain, and simple living, the Bhaiya is appreciated by his superiors and other labourers, and always gives satisfaction by his regular, sincere and hard work.

Total Monthly Expenditure

Out of the total labourers the monthly expenditure of nearly 77 per cent. is Rs. 11 to Rs. 25. The maximum percentage (34 per cent.) is of those spending Rs. 21 to Rs. 25. The monthly expenditure of about 19 per cent. is Rs. 26 to Rs. 50 and of the rest it is still higher. The higher expenses are of skilled labourers, and of those who stay with their families but do not get free quarters. Living away from the city, either at Antop Village or at the B.P.T. Chawls at Wadala Junction, these labourers on the whole lead a plain and modest life. Their frugal habits can be seen from their total monthly expenditure. The economy of these labourers will be all the more evident, if one recollects that, excepting about 23 per cent. of the total all the rest live with their families in Bombay. It is also pertinent at this stage to note the effects of free quarters on the total monthly expenditure of labourers.

It would not be incorrect to say that all these labourers, who work on the railway lines, walk the whole way to the place of their work from their quarters. It would be a great saving of their energy if the Port Trust were to use some of their idle locomotives to carry these labourers from their quarters to work in the morning, and bring them back in the evening.

Monthly Saving and Deficit

Excepting the Labourers on Water, this is the only other group which can claim the maximum percentage (87 per cent.) of the total labourers having a monthly surplus. As already remarked, it is much to the credit of these labourers that they have some surplus at the end of every month, inspite of the fact that nearly 77 per cent. of them stay with their families in Bombay. On the other hand, the Labourers on Water have a large surplus, because they stay alone in Bombay,

and their income is comparatively high. The monthly surplus of 81 per cent. of the total labourers is below Rs. 20. Only about 6 per cent. of the total can save Rs. 31 to Rs. 55. On the whole the amount of their surplus is not substantial, because many of them are unskilled with low monthly incomes.

Out of the remaining labourers, only about 7 per cent. of the total have a deficit of less than ten rupees, while about 6 per cent. of the total have neither surplus nor deficit.

Provident Fund

Nearly 35 per cent. of the total labourers have no provident fund at all, while about 20 per cent. have less than Rs. 101 as their Provident Fund and about 26 per cent. Rs. 101 to Rs. 500. The Provident Fund of about 9 per cent. is Rs. 501 to Rs. 1,000 and that of an equal number is more than Rs. 1,000. The Provident Fund of a few is Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 5,000, which is the maximum figure amongst all the Dock labourers.

Debts

The debts of these labourers are not very heavy. About 13 per cent. of the total are free from any debt, while the debts of about 37 per cent. are less than Rs. 101, of 28 per cent. (which is the maximum percentage in this group) Rs. 201 to Rs. 300, and of 15 per cent. Rs. 301 to Rs. 500. Only about 4 per cent. of the total labourers have still heavier debts, which in no case exceeds Rs. 1,000.

CHAPTER X

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Classification of Dock Labourers

The Dock Workers can be divided into two classes *viz* : (1) the principal Dock Workers, who handle cargo in the docks, and (2) Dock Workers, who attend to the other activities of the docks. The former class consists of three groups of labourers, and the latter of four. The table on page 5 shows the different groups of labourers, and the approximate number of labourers in each. The total strength of the Dock labourers is ten thousand.

The principal Dock labourers are casual workers, and are employed either by the Stevedore Firms or the Hamallage Department of the Port Trust, through some middlemen. The labourers in the second division, however, are directly employed by the Port Trust through its various departments, (See table on page 27) and are classed as temporary employees. Again, the principal Dock labourers are unskilled, while some of the labourers under the Port Trust are skilled. On the whole about 22 per cent. of the total Dock labourers are skilled.

Age

The age of people in urban areas usually differs considerably from those of rural areas, due to different economic conditions prevailing at the two places. In cities, there is comparatively a smaller number of persons in the highest and the lowest age-groups ; but there is a great preponderance of adults in the working stage. The persons in the active wage earning periods of life are recruited usually from rural areas, to which they return, when their period of wage earning is completed.

From this point of view Bombay City is excellent a place where able-bodied persons come to earn a living. Out

of the total population of the city 24 per cent. is below 15 years of age, 71 per cent. from 16 to 50, and the remaining 5 per cent. are still older. Labourers pre-eminently form a part of the second group, and the Dock labourers indeed are no exception. Excepting about 1 per cent., all the Dock labourers are 16 to 50 years of age. The maximum percentage (29 per cent.) consists of labourers from 31 to 35, and next comes the group (23 per cent.) of those from 36 to 40. On the whole, one finds a large majority (82 per cent.) of the total between the age of 25 and 45.

Examining in detail the various types of labourers, one cannot fail to notice that in all the seven groups, the maximum percentage of labourers is of those from 31 to 35 years, and the percentage of labourers from ages 36 to 40 is either the same, or a bit less. Nearly half the labourers in each group are thus between the age of 31 to 40, which fact indicates the strength and energy necessary for the hard labour in the docks. The number of novices and youngsters below 25 years is not large. The number of those above 40 years of age decreases as their age approaches fifty ; but it should be observed, however, that the percentage of those above 40 years is more in the case of labourers directly under the Port Trust than that of the principal Dock labourers. The reason for the higher percentage is accounted for by the fact that the nature of work under the Port Trust requires skill and apprenticeship ; consequently, the services of experienced labourers are quite indispensable. The group of Labourers on Shore, in particular, exhibits this tendency to the maximum limit.

Community or Caste

The four important communities which form a large quota of the total population of the City, are the Hindu (68 per cent.), the Muslim (18 per cent.) the Parsee (5 per cent.) and the Christian (7 per cent.). Amongst the Dock labourers also, there are 65 per cent. Hindus, 30 per cent. Muslims and 5 per cent. Christians, besides a few others.

Usually, the Hindu labourers do not work on water or on board a vessel, on account of religious susceptibilities ; whereas the Muslim labourers are quite prepared to work on board. As a result, the majority of Stevedore labourers (68 per cent.) and of Labourers on Water (84 per cent.) are Muslims. In the latter case, the hard life at sea and the irregular diet also play an important role in deterring even those Hindu labourers who may be able to overcome their religious susceptibilities. The other groups in which Muslim labourers are found working in considerable numbers are Labourers on Shore (30 per cent.), Labourers in the Mechanical Workshop (18 per cent.) and Labourers on the Railway (11 per cent.).

The Hindu labourers are found in all the groups, and form more than half the total number in each group, barring the two aforementioned groups, where only recently some Hindu labourers have been able to get in. As a matter of fact, the two groups of Shore labourers and Coal labourers seem to be a monopoly of Hindu labourers, due to the peculiar system of employment of the labour through intermediaries like Toliwallas, who do not allow an outsider to get in, if he is not known or related to them.

The only important Sub-castes amongst the Hindus contributing a large share are the Marathas (37 per cent.) the Mahars (13 per cent.) and the Ahirs and Agris (4 per cent.). The Marathas are found in all the groups. The Hindu Coal labourers belong to this sub-caste. But the Mahars work only in certain groups, while the Ahirs and Agris, better known as Bhaiyas are found in a large number only on the Railway.

Christians are found working only under the Port Trust, and more or less form a part of the intelligent class of labourers. They are employed as mechanics and artisans in various departments of the Port Trust, and not as coolies.

Birthplace

Mr. Sidgwick remarked in 1921 "The fact that the Bombay

population is largely immigrant," using that term of course in its census sense, is well-known.¹ Only 24.6 per cent. of the City population is home-born.

The extent to which Ratnagiri contributes to the total population is remarkable. As much as 20.4 per cent. of the population is from Ratnagiri.

Out of the total number of Bombay's Dock labourers only 5 per cent. are home-born. Though the immigrants belong to the various provinces of India a substantial contribution to the Dock labourers is made by the Bombay Presidency (82 per cent.) and the United Provinces (12 per cent.). Most of the immigrants from the United Provinces are employed as Stevedore labourers, and on the Bombay Port Trust Railway.

The Stevedore labourers come from various provinces. Only 28 per cent. of the Stevedore labourers are from Bombay Presidency, whereas 46 per cent. hail from the United Provinces. This shows the tendency among fresh immigrants to seek employment as Stevedore labourers, because in the first place it requires no training to pick up the work, and secondly it is easy to secure it.

Many of the Shore labourers belong to the Bombay Presidency, especially to Poona (49 per cent.) and Satara (24 per cent.) districts. The districts of Satara (76 per cent.) and Poona (21 per cent.) also supply the Coal labourers. Ratnagiri district (68 per cent.) and Janjira State (23 per cent.) supply the Labourers on Water. Nearly half the Labourers on Shore are also from Ratnagiri. In the same way the contribution of Ratnagiri (29 per cent.) and Satara (21 per cent.) districts to Labourers in the Mechanical Workshop is not negligible. About 34 per cent. of the Labourers on the Railway come from the United Provinces, and 49 per cent. from Ratnagiri and Nasik districts.

One can compare the contribution of Ratnagiri to the total

¹ Census of India 1931. Vol. IX p. 14.

population of the city (20.4 per cent.) and to the Dock labourers (24 per cent.) which is the maximum percentage of immigrants in both cases. About 17 per cent. of the total Dock labourers are provided by Satara, and 13 per cent. by Poona. The United Provinces occupy the fourth rank as suppliers of Dock labourers.

Original Occupation, and Causes of Immigration

Many of the Stevedore labourers, who having left their homes at an early age, seldom go back, and in course of time lose all connections with their relatives. They are all alone, and whatever little plot of land their parents might have left for them, is soon taken away by their relatives or creditors. Consequently, we find that half the labourers are without any plot of land at their villages. The rest are all agriculturists and possess some plot of land at the village. The plots are however very small, except in the case of rich Tindals, who have greater opportunities of earning money, and therefore can afford to buy and maintain large plots of land.

Excepting about 14 per cent., all the Shore labourers are agriculturists and own a small plot of agricultural land in their villages, besides a small house or a hut. Agriculture was their original occupation, and still forms an important source of income for their families. The average size of the plot is less than five bighas. The produce of agricultural fields being insufficient, it becomes necessary for some adult male member of the family to find some other work for the support of the family. Partly by way of reducing the pressure on land and partly by sending remittances from his savings occasionally, the Shore labourer supplements the income of his family. Often when there is scarcity of rain, the moneylender has got to be approached to meet agricultural losses, and for the maintenance of the family. The moneylender at times insists on a share in the agricultural produce instead of charging a heavy rate of interest. The case of Coal labourers is the same as that of the Shore labourers. Excepting some 10 per

cent., all of them possess a plot of land, or have at least some interest in land.

Coming to the various groups of labourers under the Port Trust, one finds that about 23 per cent. of Labourers on Water, 44 per cent. of Labourers on Shore, 33 per cent. of Labourers in the Mechanical Workshop, and 73 per cent. of Labourers on the Railway are definitely known to be agriculturists. They possess some plot of land and a small house or hut. But as to the rest, some of those, who have immoveable property, claim to be agriculturists, because they had some interest in agricultural land in the past, but seem to have lost it now for one reason or another. With reference to those, who have neither land nor immoveable property, it is difficult to say much about their original occupation. Some of them follow the same occupation in Bombay, as in the case of khalasees, mechanics or artisans. Some of the labourers under the Sanitary Department worked as weavers or sweepers at their native village before they left it.

Nature of Work

When a steamer is berthed in the dock, the moveable cranes on the quay, which are properly adjusted, begin their work. Stevedore labourers work on board the vessel, whereas Shore labourers attend to the cargo on the wharf. The process of unloading cargo is quite simple. After the goods inside the hatch are tied into a sling, it is lifted by the crane on the wharf and safely deposited on the shore. Then the Port Trust takes charge of the same and is held liable for any subsequent loss or damage. The goods are afterwards carried inside the adjoining transit sheds, where they are sorted and checked with the general manifests, and stacked. (The reverse process is to be followed in the case of export cargo.) Thereafter, owners can take delivery of the goods on paying the Port Trust and Customs dues.

Stevedore labourers are employed by the Stevedore firms through a Serang. The Serang in his turn approaches

the Tindals, who have under them some gangs of Hatchmen, each gang consisting of six men, excluding the Tindal. The Stevedore labourers consequently have to shift from one firm to the other as the demand arises. The Serang is the organising hand, who allots the required number of Hatchmen to each hatch of the vessel. A Tindal on the other hand is not only a middleman between the labourers and the Serang, but is also a labourer himself, and often works with his gangs. The Hatchmen have to work all day long inside the hatch, tying goods into slings ready to be lifted by the crane. Want of sufficient air and light at the bottom of the ship renders the heavy work of the Hatchmen quite uncomfortable. Besides these, there are Winchmen who operate the winch of a steamer, and Foremen whose duty it is to give directions as to the movements of the crane and the winch. Though no special danger can be attached to any particular type of work, yet the place where the work is being carried on is dangerous. Breakage of the chain of a crane, or even a slight mistake somewhere would bring down the cargo and result in a serious accident.¹ The public walking on the wharf are warned of the danger by notices to the effect placarded on the wharfs. The unceasing vigilance of the Chain Testing Department of the Port Trust tries to minimise such accidents.

The Hamallage Department maintains a list of Toliwallas to whom sub-contracts are given in turn for clearing cargo from the wharfs, and arranging them in the adjoining transit sheds. Each Toliwalla has some gangs of labourers of his own and borrows others of his friends, if necessary, whenever he gets the contract. In all, there are six types of Shore labourers *viz.* (1) Boy labourers, (2) Matari labourers, (3) Stackers, (4) Cart unloaders, (5) Cotton exporters and (6) Sundry Muccadums and Coolies. The Boy labourers

¹ See the Table of accidents on pages 136-37.

handle all sorts of cargo, except bag cargo, which is reserved for Matari labourers. Each gang of the former consists of 12 persons, and that of the latter of 16 persons. These labourers have to unsling the cargo from the crane, and carry them inside the transit sheds on Hath-gadies. The work requires no apprenticeship ; so many novices join the docks as Boy labourers also. However, to carry a bag, weighing five to six maunds requires an experienced labourer and the task of Matari labourers is no light one. The duty of Stackers is to sort out goods in the sheds, and arrange them. Cart unloaders are necessary when export cargo has got to be unloaded from motor lorries or railway wagons. It is an art to put about four to six cotton bales in the sling of a single iron chain in such a way that not even a bale may slip out. Sundry coolies and Muccadums are directly employed by the Hamallage Department to supervise the work of Shore labourers, and for other work.

This completes the chain of various sets of labourers working at different stages, through which the cargo passes when it is unloaded or loaded. The work of Stevedore labourers and Shore labourers forms one continuous process divided into different stages ; consequently, harmonious working between these various sets of labourers is essential for the speedy disposal of cargo.

The activities of Coal labourers are scattered over three places, *viz.*, in the stream, at the docks, and at storing depots at the Darukhana, situated to the west of Reay Road Station. As coal dust would not only spoil the cargo and properties of the Port Trust, but would also be injurious to the health of the public, coal-steamers do not discharge coal in the docks. This is one of the reasons why coal is discharged in the stream, about half a mile away from the docks. But it is more convenient and economical to bunker inside the docks while the vessel is being loaded or unloaded.

Some of the Stevedore firms also enter into contracts for

discharging coal, and bunkering coal in steamers. They employ the labourers through a sub-contractor called the Head Muccadam, and the system resembles that followed amongst Shore labourers. The Head Muccadam requests other Gang Muccadams to supply the necessary number of labourers. Each Gang Muccadam has about 20 to 30 men under him, and sends them whenever and wherever required. They are not attached to any particular firm. It is interesting to note that these labourers are recruited by the Gang Muccadam from his own native village or round about, and are either related to him or belong to his own caste. The hope of better prospects in a city like Bombay, combined with some loan for marriage expenses or other social and agricultural purposes, together with travelling allowance, is a sufficient inducement to any man in his position to migrate for work to Bombay. The Muccadam thus combines in himself the function of a moneylender with that of a Labour Recruiting Officer.

Though the general nature of work at the three places is similar, there is an appreciable difference between the various stages through which the work is being carried out, and the conditions under which the labourers work. All these labourers have to work in coal dust more or less. Hence they do not put on any clothes while at work, except a langot, or a loincloth and piece of cloth on the head, which is tied over the nose to prevent coal dust from being inhaled. Some women, who work as Coal labourers, of course put on their usual dress, but in addition tie a piece of cloth over the nose for similar reasons.

The work of discharging coal is divided into two stages. Firstly, that of shovelling coal and filling the baskets inside the hatch, and secondly, that of carrying these baskets on board, weighing the coal, and discharging it in barges waiting alongside. The labourers divide themselves into two sets, each one attending to the work at one stage. The hard work

of shovelling coal in the pitch darkness of hatches, combined with the heat inside them, is sufficient to tire anyone quickly. Equally difficult is the work on the Falka. The modern economical Tub-system, which replaces the old Falka-method, is more dangerous.

After the barges are loaded, they are tugged on to the Darukhana and unloaded there. The conditions of work at the Darukhana are much better due to less coal dust and there is no complaint of want of fresh air and light. This work is also safer, and hence it is that labourers at the Darukhana do not like to work on a collier except on higher wages in case of emergency. The work of bunkering coal is carried on in the open air. Other conditions of work are not different from those on colliers.

As already observed, the labourers under various departments of the Port Trust are both skilled and unskilled. There is no definite distinction between the two classes. The gradation amongst them depends upon the apprenticeship and skill required for the job, upon which factor also depends the scale of wages. The wages in turn affect their standard and mode of living. Consequently, an arbitrary rule has been adopted to distinguish the skilled labourers as those earning more than Rs. 40, and others as unskilled.

Yet, there are many characteristics common to labourers working at the same place, be he a skilled or an unskilled labourer. The labourers are therefore grouped according to the place of their work.

There are as many as ten types of labourers employed in the group of Labourers on Water. They have to work in lighthouses, steamlaunches and tugs, dredgers, etc., and the irregular hard life on the sea makes their task tedious.

Among the Labourers on Shore, there are eleven different types under various departments. A large number of them are employed by the Hydraulic Establishment. The process of dry-docking is interesting to observe. Everyone knows,

what the employees under the Electrical Department and the Bhangies are expected to do.

Attached to the docks is the Mechanical Workshop, where about 800 labourers of seventeen important types, attend to all sorts of repairs connected with dock-gear, and other properties of the Trustees. If one visualises the variety of workmen required for repairing even a steamlaunch, he can understand the relation between the different types of labourers and the co-operation necessary for the work.

The Port Trust Railway serves not only all the berths at the docks, but also the warehouses at different depots; and thus its services extend beyond the functions of a Belt line. The Loco-shed at Wadala looks after the locomotives on the line, while the Senior Assistant Engineer's Department keeps the railway lines in order with the help of Gangmen, Keymen, etc. The Railway Manager's Department attends to the Goods traffic, with which only, the Bombay Port Trust Railway is concerned. About twenty one different types of labourers are employed by these departments.

Accidents

The following table shows particulars of accidents that occurred to persons during the year 1933-34, which will give an idea as to the general nature of accidents in the docks.

Accidents during the Year 1933-34¹

On Board Vessels—

Causes of Accidents	1 Slight	2 Serious	3 Fatal	4 Total
Falling into holds or lighters ..	6	8	2	16
Falling into Dry Docks ..	—	—	—	—
Goods falling out of slings ..	—	4	1	5
Breakage of slings ..	—	1	1	2
Other causes ..	137	15	2	154
In 1933-34 ..	143	28	6	177
In 1932-33 ..	85	10	3	98

¹ Information obtained from the Port Trust.

On Quays, Sheds and Roads—

Causes of Accidents	Slight	Serious	Fatal	Total
Breakage of chain slings ..	1	2	—	3
Breakage of rope slings ..	1	—	—	1
Run over by carts, motors or railway wagons ..	8	1	1	10
Failure of ships' gear or machinery ..	—	—	—	—
Failure of Trustee's gear or machinery ..	—	—	—	—
Goods falling out of slings ..	1	—	—	1
Other causes ..	253	10	1	264
In 1933-34 ..	264	13	2	279
In 1932-33 ..	258	18	—	276

In Dock Basins—

Causes of Accidents	Slight	Serious	Fatal	Total
Falling into Dock Basins—				
In 1933-34 ..	2	1	1	3
In 1932-33 ..	2	—	2	4
Grand Total In 1933-34 ..	409	42	8	459
Grand Total In 1932-33 ..	345	28	5	378

Fires

Nine fires occurred in the docks and on board vessels in the docks, against five in 1932-33, and five in 1931-32.

Medical Relief

Ordinary medicines for the employees of the Port Trust are provided for by the Port Trust ; but a scale of charges, representing nearly the cost price, has been fixed for the employee's families.

The four Port Trust Dispensaries at Antop Village, Wadala, Grain Depot, and Prince's Dock, are open daily in the morning and the evening at fixed hours. The Sub-Assistant Surgeon, Prince's Dock, who resides on the premises of the Dispensary, treats minor accidents and gives preliminary aid in other cases.

The Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923

The Compensation Acts are designed to correct what has become a generally recognised evil. The intention of the Act is to prevent the workmen and their dependents becoming objects of charity, by making reasonable compensation for all such calamities as are incidental to the employment. Injuries to servants are no longer the result of fault or negligence, but are considered as the product of the industry itself. Such injuries enter like any other item in the cost of production or of transportation, and ultimately are charged to the consumer of the manufactured goods, or to him who secured the transport thereof.

The following extracts from *The Statement of Objects and Reasons, and the Report of the Select Committee to the Amending Act V of 1929* may be noticed in connection with the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923. "The application of the Workmen's Compensation Act to dock labourers, etc., is governed partly by existing clause (V) [now clause (VIII)] of Schedule II of the Act and partly by a notification issued by the Governor-General-in-Council under Section 2(3) of the Act. The two provisions are not entirely consistent, as the former applies only to the places where steam water or other mechanical power or electrical power is used, whereas the latter imposes no such restrictions. The revised clause consolidates the provisions of the existing clause (V) and of the notification, and eliminates the condition relating to the use of power. The revised clause will now include all persons employed for the purpose of loading, unloading, fuelling, constructing, repairing, demolishing, cleaning or paint-

ing a ship irrespective of the place where the ship may be."

* * * * *

"It has also been pointed out that the clause as framed will include some dock labourers but not others. We agree that this appears illogical."

The Report of the Royal Commission on Labour, on which the Amending Act of 1933 is based, recommended an extension of the definition to cover all classes of workmen employed in docks. Accordingly the Act was amended by the Amending Act of 1933 ; the relevant portion is as under :—

SCHEDULE II

"The following persons are workmen within the meaning of section 2(1) (ⁿ) and subject to the provisions of that section, that is to say any person who is :—

* * * * *

(vii) Employed for the purpose of loading, unloading, fueling, constructing, repairing, demolishing, cleaning or painting any ship of which he is not the master or a member of the crew, or in the handling of transport within limits of any port, subject to the Indian Ports Act, 1908, of goods which have been discharged from or are to be loaded into any vessel."

Prior to the Amending Act of 1933, it was held that the protection under the Act was meant for the workmen who were engaged in the process of handling cargo, so as to transfer it from the wharf to the hold of a ship which was actually being loaded. Accordingly a workman, who may get injured while stacking goods in the sheds alongside the wharf, was not considered a workman engaged for the purpose of loading a ship. The clause is now widened so as to include all Dock labourers.

Working Hours and Night Shifts

The usual working hours for labourers in the docks are from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. with one hour's recess at 12-30 p.m.

except on Sundays and Holidays. The sanctioned holidays recognised by the Trustees are Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Good Friday, the King's Birthday, and any special occasion ordered by them. The night shift begins from 7 p.m. and continues upto 3 a.m. Work upto 12 midnight is taken as half night work. The usual working hours prevail generally amongst all the Dock labourers, but the difference in some cases deserves notice. The Stevedore labourers working in the stream, leave the shore at about 6-30 or 7 a.m. and return to the shore about an hour after the usual working hours. Similarly, the Coal labourers, who work on colliers have to be present at about 5-30 a.m. at the Colsa Pool, and are transported to the colliers in barges at about 6 or 6-30 a.m., and return to the shore in the evening at about 7 p.m.

The working hours of Labourers on Water are not regular as they are determined by changes in the tide, and the arrival or departure of vessels. Consequently, the working hours of most of the labourers change from day to day, though a working day is reckoned as consisting of nine hours. For the same reason it is not possible to distinguish between day work and night work. The labourers engaged at the Dry docks are required to work according to the time of docking and undocking of vessels.

The Labourers in the Mechanical Workshop have to put in 48 hours work per week.

The Labourers under the Railway Manager work by shifts. The first shift works from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. and the second from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. The working hours of some of the labourers at the Loco-shed are from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. as they are compelled to put in twelve hours work per day. The Drivers and Firemen working on locomotives from 4 a.m. to 11 p.m., are also required to put in twelve hours work, but they are allowed rest at the end of every four hours continuous work.

Night work is very common amongst all the principal Dock

labourers, as the Companies to which the vessels belong are anxious to load or unload, in as short time as possible due to heavy charges at the docks, as well as the anxiety to keep to their schedule time ; so every casual labourer gets night work for about two to three days in a month. Some of the Labourers on Shore, like Crane Drivers who have to work in co-operation with these labourers, also have to put in night work. It is not unusual to employ for night work a labourer who has worked during the day. Thus a labourer may have to work consecutively for two days and the night in between. One fails to understand why such a practice is followed inspite of the fact that a large number of labourers are idling their time. It is submitted that a rule should be made to employ fresh labourers for every shift, so far as available.

Wherever there is a rush of work, the mechanical workshop is kept open continuously for a fortnight, although night work is not usual.

Unemployment

Before discussing the problem of wages, it is better first to ascertain the actual number of working days of the Dock labourers. All the labourers under the Port Trust get more or less regular work, and the wages for one or two days, which they may lose by way of leave or absenteeism, is soon made up by the extra work they do or by night work. Most of the Labourers on Water receive monthly wages, but the rest are all employed on daily wages, and their monthly income is calculated on the basis of 26 working days in a month, deducting the four Sundays.

The principal Dock labourers, however, are all casual, and there is great unemployment amongst them. Even the Report of the Royal Commission on Labour observes, "The main problem in connection with dock labour is that of minimising the hardships due to unemployment or under-employment. The unemployed may not appear, as in the West, at Calling-on-stands, but they are to be found in their lodgings, in the

streets or at the dock gates seeking employment". In Karachi, the Dock labourers are unable to secure adequate employment to maintain themselves and their families. The wharf labourers are employed for only about 10 to 12 days in a month. The Dock labourers in Rangoon work on the average for not more than 12 or 13 days in a month. In Bombay, the Stevedore labourers can get work for about 12 to 15 days in a month, including night work. The Boy labourers are employed for about 15 days in a month, but as the trade in bag cargo is limited the Matari labourers hardly get work for ten days. The remaining different types of Shore labourers can procure a little more work due to their limited number. The Coal labourers, however, like Matari labourers are unable to secure work for more than ten days a month. The limited trade of the Port in coal has been recently much affected by its rival, the fuel oil.

Decasualization and Registration

The demand for the principal Dock labourers is casual, for it depends on the arrival and departure of ships, and the urgency with which vessels are to be loaded or unloaded. Hence the labour supply in a port is usually in excess of immediate requirements. But the tendency amongst the employers is to encourage larger reserves than necessary, in order to provide ample margins against emergencies. The fresh immigrants, and unemployed labourers from other industries, who work as Stevedore labourers and Boy labourers, add to this reserve, and make the problem of unemployment an acute one. The existing system of employing labourers through intermediaries like Tindals, Toliwallas, or Muccadums is bound to be associated with abuse, as it gives the middlemen power to determine which labourers should receive employment.

The first step towards decasualization of employment in a port is registration. It not only restricts the employment, except in cases of emergency, to registered men, but also reduces

the reserve of labour to the number really needed by the Port. The number, really needed by the Port, may be determined by the average number of labourers employed from day to day, as well as the maximum and minimum necessary. In finding out the aggregate demand for Dock labourers, due consideration should be given to the seasonal fluctuations, the individual demand of employers, and the demand for specialised labourers needed for bag cargo, cotton, coal, etc., the volume of trade in which items is limited. The need for immediate supply of labour is the main factor which affects them all for the heavy charges at the docks compel the ships to unload and load cargo with the least possible delay. The admission of new men to the register should be restricted to fill in vacancies.

By organising the supply of labour in this manner, it remains for the employers to see that the Registered labourers get preference. Wherever possible the method of direct employment should be followed.

Even where it is not possible to abolish the system of sub-contractors, minimum wages for different types of labourers should be fixed. Direct payment to the labourers on behalf of the sub-contractors may even be suggested as the right step.

The successful working of such a scheme requires the co-operation of the employers and the employees, and legislation by the Government. The scheme of Registration has been tried in London and has certainly done much for the port by shutting out the influx of men from all industries. The report of the Royal Commission on labour observes, "We recommend the adoption in each of the main ports of a system of registration, which should be supervised and controlled by the port authority, assisted by representatives of shipowners, stevedores and labourers."

Strike of 1932

On 12th March, 1932, 60 workers under one Stevedore firm struck work, demanding *inter alia* an increase in the rates of

wages. In due course, the strikers gained strength, increasing their number upto about 1,900. It was not until 4th April, 1932, that a compromise was arrived at between the representatives of the workers and the stevedores, and the Dock Workers' Union called off the strike. The only moral to be drawn from the incident is 'prevention is better than cure'.

Labour Unions

There are three labour unions of the Dock labourers, one of which is connected with the principal Dock labourers, and two with the employees under the Port Trust. The Bombay Dock Workers' Union claims 500 members from amongst the Stevedore labourers and Coal labourers. The Bombay Port Trust Employees' Union has on its role 569 members, working under different departments of the Port Trust. The Bombay Port Trust Railwaymen's Union is supported by 376 members.¹

Wages and Monthly Income

The remuneration of a gang of Stevedore labourers is fixed at Rs. 10-8-0 per day. The Tindal, who pockets as much as he can for himself, settles the wages of individual labourers, between Rs. 1-4-0 to Rs. 2 per day. The Winchman and Foreman each receive Rs. 1-4-0 per day. Calculating on the basis of an average of 14 days per month, the monthly income of about 58 per cent. of the Stevedore labourers is below Rs. 21 and of the rest higher, rising upto Rs. 35.

Similarly, the wages of Shore labourers are settled by the respective Toliwallas concerned, and vary from Re. 1 to Rs. 2-8-0. Sundry coolies, and Muccadums are directly employed and paid by the Hamallage Department. About 54 per cent. of Shore labourers earn upto Rs. 20 monthly, and the rest more. The highest earnings are Rs. 45.

The monthly income of Coal labourers is below Rs. 21, with the exception of a few rich Muccadums, whose daily

¹ These figures represent the position on the 1st June, 1934.

wages are between Re. 1 to Rs. 2-8-0.

As previously noticed, 22 per cent. of the total Dock labourers are skilled workers. They are directly employed by the Port Trust on monthly or daily wages ; but the payment is made in all cases at the end of every month. Examining each of the four groups under the Port Trust, one finds that about 30 per cent. of the Labourers on Water, 32 per cent. of the Labourers on Shore, 61 per cent. of the Labourers in the Mechanical Workshop, and 16 per cent. of the Labourers on the Railway are skilled workers. The majority of these skilled labourers earn below Rs. 101 but there are a few whose monthly income rises upto Rs. 150. The income of the labourers in the Mechanical Workshop is the highest, because the percentage of skilled labourers in the group is greater.

Turning to the income of unskilled labourers, one finds that very few earn below Rs. 21 a month. The income of the rest is between Rs. 21 to Rs. 40.

Mode and Standard of Living

Having already considered the question about income, it is but proper to find out the dependents on labourers to correctly visualise the mode and standard of their living.

Dependents

Nearly half the Stevedore labourers have no dependents, because they are cut off from their relations and are unmarried. The percentage of labourers with no dependents in other groups is practically negligible. All other labourers have at least some dependents. The average number of dependents is between two to five members.

In spite of having a family, more than half the casual labourers stay alone in Bombay while the remaining labourers stay either with all or some members of their families in Bombay. The reason why they stay alone is not that they prefer to do so, but because they cannot afford to stay with their family in Bombay ; they invite them down only when

they have some surplus funds. But the explanation of the fact, that about 93 per cent. of the Labourers on Water stay alone in Bombay, is that they find it troublesome to look after a family, as their hours of work are irregular. The majority of the labourers in the remaining groups do stay at least with some members of the family, and the number increases to about three-fourths of the total with the Labourers on the Railway.

Rent, Food, Clothing and Luxuries

Only 10 per cent. of the total Stevedore labourers, who have a family in Bombay occupy a separate room. The usual practice amongst about 40 per cent. of them is to hire a room or two and have about six to ten persons to stay together in the same room sharing the rent equally. If the room is very large, even twenty to thirty persons are found to live together. The remaining one-half are homeless, sleeping on the foot-path of Frere Road, or in the neighbourhood under the open sky, or on the verandahs of godowns nearby.

With the exception of a few who stay with their family in Bombay, all the rest take their food in some restaurant near the docks or at their rooms. In the morning, they take tea, with bread and Kabab. The afternoon meal consists of rice and fish, but in the evening they provide themselves with a fuller meal consisting of roti, rice, vegetable etc. All this costs eight annas a day, but the monthly expenditure on food is put down as Rs. 13, because often they forego a meal or two, when short of funds.

The ordinary dress of a Stevedore labourer is a loongi, or a dhoti, a shirt, a jacket or/and a coat, a cap, and a pair of shoes or champals ; smoking, drinking, and in few cases even ganja and charas are common amongst these people, while some of them are addicted to other vices also.

Many of the Shore labourers, who stay alone in Bombay, prefer boarding at a friend's or a relative's place. The usual charge for a boarder, is Rs. 10 per month. Many of these

labourers do not rent any room at all, but keep their luggage in the room, where they board and sleep outside on the verandah or the street, and thus save paying a rent. The rest have to rent a room. There are some chawls built by the Port Trust at Wari Bunder for the convenience of the Shore labourers, and the rent charged for each room is Rs. 5/8 or even less per month, according to the size of the room.

There is practically no difference in the diet of a Toliwalla or an ordinary labourer, or any distinction between that of a member of the family and a boarder. Early in the morning at about 5-30 or 6 a.m. the women prepare some bajri-bread or wheat-chapati, and some vegetable for the morning breakfast for the whole family. The labourers have to take the same food with them for the midday meal ; but a full meal consisting of chapati, vegetable, dal, or curry and rice, awaits them in the evening, and on holidays. Usually, the Marathas do not partake of non-vegetarian food, but the Mahars do not object to the same. The cost of food for a family of two to three persons is at least between Rs. 16 to Rs. 20 per month.

The normal yearly clothing requirements of a male are two pairs of dhoties, four shirts, some underwears, two turbans, a coat, and a pair of champals costing in all about Rs. 20 to Rs. 25. A female requires about three sarees and four to six bodices, worth about Rs. 15 to Rs. 20.

About three to five rupees are spent on tea, tobacco, ganja, charas etc., while some of the labourers indulge in drink once or twice a week. The Toliwallas have more expensive habits.

The life of the Coal labourers is similar to that of the Shore labourers.

With regard to the skilled and unskilled labourers under the Port Trust, the great difference in the income of the two has some effect on their standard of living, although the mode of living and habits are almost alike. The skilled labourers, who earn more, spend more on their comforts and conveniences. The comparatively better rooms, more nutritious food,

and decent dress of a skilled labourer makes him the envy of many an unskilled labourer, and serves as an impetus to the latter to work harder and attain the former's status.

Some of the Labourers on Water, who work in the light-houses and on the Pilot vessel, get free boarding and lodging, while some labourers are provided with free quarters only, and the remaining have to rent a room and follow the usual practice of several of them staying together.

All the labourers working on Dredgers and other Flotilla have to partake of at least one meal a day on board, besides morning and afternoon tea, and so the Port Trust provides them with cooks for the purpose. Therefore such labourers have to pay two bills for the cost of food — one on board, and the other on shore.

The usual dress of a Khalasee on work consists of blue trousers, a blue coat, a shirt, an underwear, a small red cap, and a pair of shoes.

With regard to the Labourers on Shore nothing more is to be added except that some of these labourers have to rent rooms near the docks, paying at times as much as sixteen to twenty rupees a month. It is submitted that the Port Trust can give them much relief by providing sufficient chawls for them near the docks.

One interesting thing to be noticed in the remaining two groups, is the plain and simple life of a Bhaiya on the Railway. With his economic living, and regular, sincere, hard services, he has endeared himself to his superiors.

Many of the labourers on the Railway are given free quarters either at Wadala or at Antop Village.

Maternity Home and Infant Welfare Centre

There are in all 14 beds in the Maternity Home attached to the Wari Bunder Labourers' Chawls. The total number of admissions in 1933-34 was 633, of whom 68 were occupants of the chawls, 73 were wives of Port Trust Employees not living in the chawls and 492 were outsiders.

The Infant Welfare Centre at Wari Bunder catered for the needs of 1161 children during 1933-34, of whom 279 were from the Chawls and 882 from outside.

School

The number of pupils on the rolls of the school at the Docks Labourers' Quarters was 124, including 35 girls, in 1933-34, as against 113 in the previous year. The school staff which is maintained by the Port Trust, consists of five teachers, one of whom is a lady teacher.

Total Monthly Expenditure

The total monthly expenses of the labourers has been arrived at by examining in detail their expenditure on rent, food, clothing, and luxuries.

The average expenditure on food and clothing of a Steve-dore labourer comes to about Rs. 15 per month and in addition to this about Rs. 2 to Rs. 5 is spent as sundry expenses for tobacco, drink, etc., besides the rent, which most of the labourers save as they do not rent any rooms. Nearly 82 per cent. of them live on this minimum standard. The expenses of the other labourers are higher because they stay with their families in Bombay, or lead a more expensive life.

The Shore labourers live a simple modest life, so the minimum monthly expenditure of a labourer, staying as a boarder with a family and paying Rs. 10, comes to about Rs. 15. Nearly 37 per cent. live upon this minimum standard, while the expenses of about 47 per cent. is about Rs. 30. Similarly about 75 per cent. of the Coal labourers spend less than Rs. 21 per head.

As some of the labourers under the Port Trust are skilled workers, their expenses are more than those of the unskilled ones. With the exception of those who are provided with free boarding and lodging facilities by the Port Trust, the expenses of the other Labourers on Water are comparatively higher. This can be explained to some extent by the fact that they have to pay for their food both on board and on shore. Yet,

it should be kept in mind that nearly 93 per cent. of the labourers in this group stay in Bombay without their families. The expenses of 75 per cent. of these labourers vary between Rs. 21 to Rs. 40 per head.

About 60 per cent. of the Labourers on Shore spend less than Rs. 40 but only 37 per cent. of the labourers in the Mechanical Workshop fall in the same category. The remaining 63 per cent. of the latter spend still more, because about 61 per cent. of the labourers are skilled, and also because an equal number stay as boarders. As there are only 16 per cent. of skilled labourers on the Railway, we find that the expenses of about 77 per cent. are less than Rs. 26 per month. But one can only appreciate the plain and economical life of these labourers, amongst whom there are a good many Bhaiyas from the United Provinces, when one recollects that not less than three-fourths of them live with their families in Bombay.

Monthly Surplus or Deficit

The only group in which there is no deficit is that of the Labourers on Water. Their surplus is substantial, as about 83 per cent. save more than Rs. 20 a month. However, as most of them live alone in Bombay, they can save still more, provided they are a bit more economical.

Next let us turn to the group of Labourers on the Railway. Although about 87 per cent. of them have a surplus, the amount saved is not substantial. The reason is that there are many unskilled labourers, whose income is small.

Examining the remaining two groups of labourers under the Port Trust, it appears that more than 60 per cent. of the labourers in each group have a surplus, while some of the remaining labourers have a deficit, which varies between Re. 1 to Rs. 20.

The savings of the principal Dock labourers, however, are below Rs. 20, with a few exceptions. Again about one-third of them each have a deficit of about Rs. 20 a month, which amount is not negligible, considering their meagre income.

The savings thus made are utilised in sending remittances to their village either monthly in small sums of five to ten rupees, or once in two or three months in larger amounts, according to the requirements of the family. Sometimes the labourer invites his family down to Bombay, and thus utilises the savings already made. In some cases, this surplus forms only an addition to the pocket money, and is frittered away by spendthrift workers.

Provident Fund

Another direction, in which savings are made by the temporary employees of the Port Trust is compulsory contribution to the Provident Fund. No doubt about 24 per cent. of the labourers under the Port Trust have nothing to their credit by way of Provident Fund. The Provident Funds of about 42 per cent. of the labourers is less than Rs. 501 each, while that of 16 per cent. varies between Rs. 501 to Rs. 1,000 each, and that of the remaining labourers is still higher, as much as five thousand rupees in some cases.

Indebtedness of Labourers

Most of the Dock labourers are involved in debt. The agricultural losses, maintenance of the family, and expenses for social needs such as a marriage in the family, sickness, etc., compel these labourers to approach the Shahukars, or the Pathans. The moneylender advances large sums only on the security of some immoveable or moveable properties, and charges usurious rates of interest, at times rising as high as 25 per cent. per annum. Soon the securities prove insufficient, as the labourer is unable to keep pace with the increasing liabilities, and the moneylender satisfies the debts by selling the securities, and crediting the sale proceeds. Often the moneylender insists on a share in the produce of the fields, and thus deprives the labourer of his well-earned bread.

The Pathans are approached for short-term loans, and his rate of interest is as high as four annas per rupee per mensem.

In the case of Coal labourers, the recruiting Muccadam

himself acts as a moneylender. He does not pay the labourer his full wages but allows him to draw such amounts as would be sufficient for his maintenance, reserving the rest of the labourer's wages for payment of the debt to himself.

Some of the labourers under the Port Trust, owe debts to the Bombay Port Trust Employees Co-operative Credit Society Ltd., which advances loans only for specific purposes, such as sickness, marriage, etc., to be repaid by fixed monthly instalments. The rate of interest charged by the Society is $9\frac{3}{8}$ per cent.

More than half the Stevedore labourers do not have any debts, and the debts of nearly 36 per cent. is less than Rs. 101 each. From this one should not conclude that the Stevedore labourers have enough and therefore need no more. The truth about the matter is that no one will advance large sums to a Stevedore labourer, who has nothing to give by way of security.

The Shore labourers and Coal labourers are burdened with heavy debts. Only about 29 per cent. of the former, and 11 per cent. of the latter are free from debts. The majority of debts are below Rs. 501 but in few instances they rise even above Rs. 2,000.

One would be surprised to find the Labourers on Water involved in debts, even though they have a large monthly surplus. Similar conditions prevail amongst the Labourers on Shore and Labourers in the Mechanical Workshop, but the Labourers on the Railway show a good contrast. About 13 per cent. of these labourers owe no debts, while the debts of about 65 per cent. is below Rs. 200, inspite of the fact that many of them stay with their families in Bombay.

It is time the Port Trust devised some scheme to gradually repay the debts of their employees by advances from the Provident Fund, otherwise an arrangement should be made to advance short-term loans to them, at cheap rates of interest, to save them from the clutches of the moneylender. Another

way in which the labourers can be protected by the Port Trust is to disallow any attachment on the pay of the employees, except in cases where loans are made at moderate rates with the knowledge of the officer in charge of the employers. The present rule of the Port Trust in this connection is as follows :—

“Employees taking the benefit of the Insolvency Act, or known to be heavily involved will be liable to be suspended pending inquiry and to dismissal. Any employee whose pay, or part of it, is attached by the Small Causes Court and who does not effect an arrangement for the removal of the attachment within three months will be liable to dismissal.”

The Trustees, it is submitted, should amend this rule as suggested above.

The two main problems facing the Dock industry to-day are the decreasing trade of the Port and the heavy toll exacted from the wages of labourers by the parasitic class. Apart from the universal shrinkage in the volume of trade resulting from the world depression, Bombay has to confront the competition of ports on the Western coast of India, especially those of Kathiawar, which increasingly divert the sea-borne traffic from Bombay. The prosperity of the employers, and the employees, as well as of the City, depends to a large extent upon the growth of the trade. The trade depression has not only reduced the total number of Dock workers, but has also increased unemployment, especially amongst the casual labourers, to an alarming extent. The first step towards decasualisation of employment in a port is registration, which helps to organise the sources of supply.

Whatever may be the average income of the Dock labourer upon which depends his standard of living, it is an admitted fact that there is a large parasitic class preying on the worker—the moneylender, and the middlemen, like Tindals, Toliwallas, or Muccadums who take a heavy toll of the hard-earned wages of a labourer. These intermediaries exact the

maximum remuneration from the employers, but distribute the minimum wages amongst the labourers. This indirect method of employment of labour is another obstacle in the way of the prosperity of the labourers, and of industrial peace. Direct employment of labourers, which is suggested as a remedial measure to this evil, is likely to be opposed by them as it puts a salutary check on the power of the middlemen to determine which labourers should receive employment.

APPENDIX A

SCHEDULE

Serial No.	CLASS.
I.	Name :
II.	Age :
III.	Caste :
IV.	Birth Place :
V.	Native Occupation :
VI.	Nature of Work :
VII.	Employed by :
VIII.	Working Hours :
IX.	Wages :
	a. Other Sources of Income :
X.	Dependents :
	a. Wife :
	b. Children :
	c. Others :
XI.	Rent (per month) :
XII.	Number of Rooms Occupied :
XIII.	Food Expenses (monthly) :
XIV.	Clothing Expenses (annual) :
XV.	Luxuries :
	a. Tobacco :
	b. Drink :
	c. Cinema or other Recreations :
XVI.	Remittance to Village :
	a. Ornaments :
XVII.	Debt :
	a. From Co-op. Soc. :
	b. Rate of Interest :
XVIII.	Remarks :